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## First Things First: Writing Strategies -- Move Close to the Action

Marilyn L. Grady

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, [mgrady1@unl.edu](mailto:mgrady1@unl.edu)

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# First Things First: Writing Strategies

Marilyn L. Grady

## Move Close to the Action

Some individuals seem to have an endless array of research and writing ideas; other individuals seem to have few research and writing ideas. For many, finding a way to prime the writing pump is a cause of concern. A frequently heard comment is, "I don't know how to get started."

One way to discover writing opportunities is to expand your network. Conferences provide opportunities to meet many individuals from many places. These individuals are sources of research and writing ideas. The conference sessions are replete with writing ideas.

The conference bulletin boards, materials tables, and program provide research and writing ideas. Look at the announcements posted on bulletin boards and tables—calls for proposals and invitations to write for journals can be found in these locations. Journals advertise themes for issues and often post these at conferences. Use these invitations as a stimulus to writing.

The number of edited encyclopedias of research in various areas of education is increasing. Through your network, you may be invited to participate in contributing to these volumes. Identify the editor of a proposed encyclopedia and contact the editor for topics that have not been assigned. Writing for the encyclopedias puts you in the company of the prominent scholars in the field.

Editors often seek authors for book chapters. If your network of professional contacts is extensive, you may be invited to contribute to these important works.

Talking to editors of journals will increase your knowledge of opportunities for writing. Take the information and use it to plan your writing agenda.

Expanding your network will allow you to learn who the "play makers" are in your field. The "play makers" provide opportunities for others and they know how to bring others into initiatives. Standing closer to the action may be a worthwhile approach to stimulating your research and writing efforts.

The talking and networking must lead to research and writing. The talking should not be a means of dodging the loneliness of sitting down to write.

"True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,  
As those move easiest have learn'd to dance."  
—Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (1711)