

# Hacking your work life to **create more time** (and **maintain your creativity**)

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# HOBSON LAB: POSTDOCS, GRAD STUDENTS, & REUS



Annemarie van der Marel



Grace Smith Vidaurre



Sanjay Prasher



Claire O'Connell



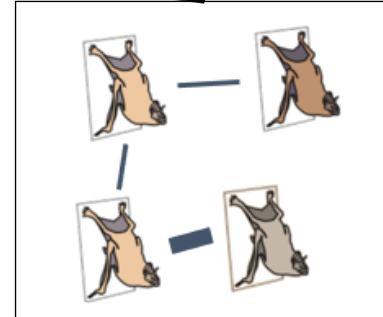
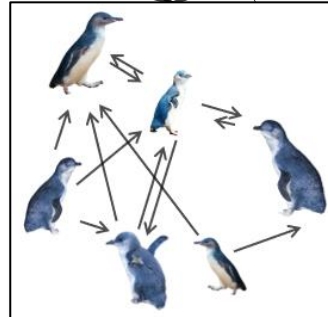
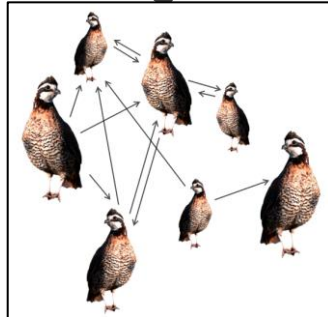
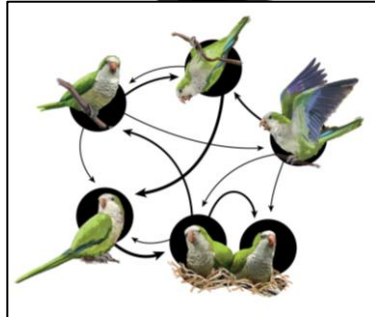
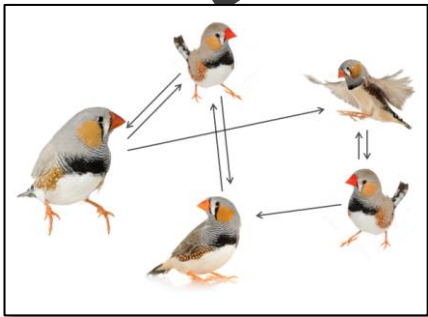
Xavier Francis



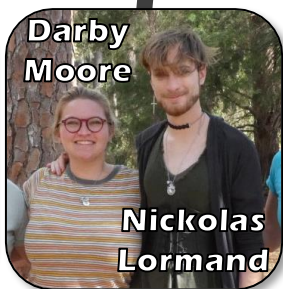
Chelsea Carminito



Julie Barnes



Cesar Estien



Darby Moore

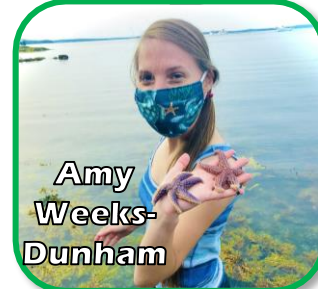
Nickolas Lormand



Kelsie Huss



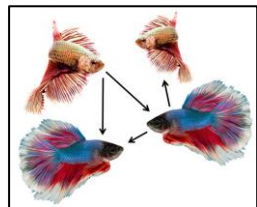
Zaria Griffith



Amy Weeks-Dunham



Kalem Schrock







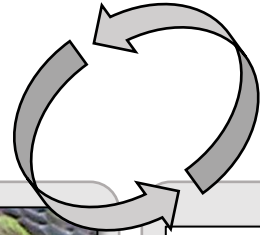
What do individuals **“know”** about their social worlds?  
How do they **perceive**, **process**, and **store** this information?  
How can they **use** this information to make **decisions**?



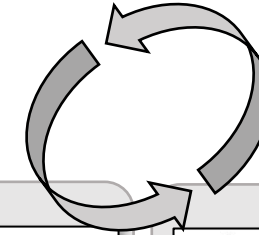
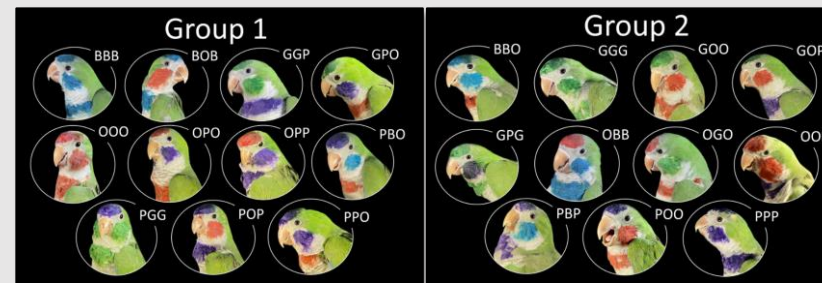
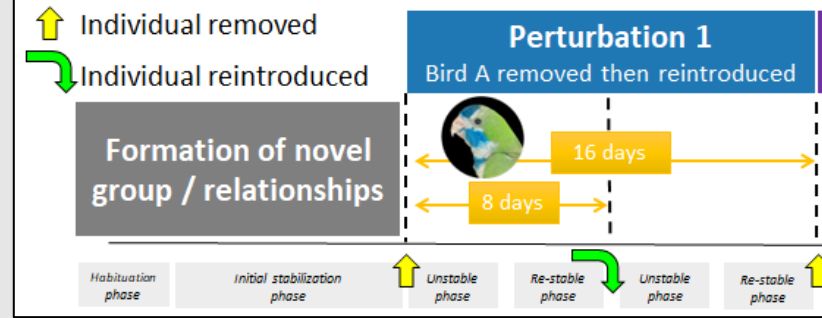


We use an **integrative approach** to carefully parse **potential connections** between sociality and cognition

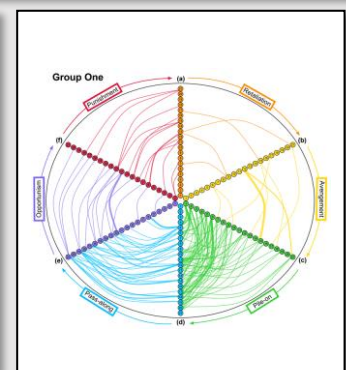
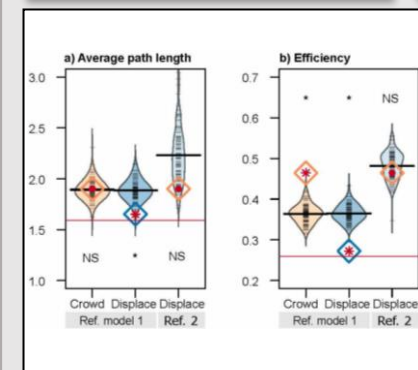
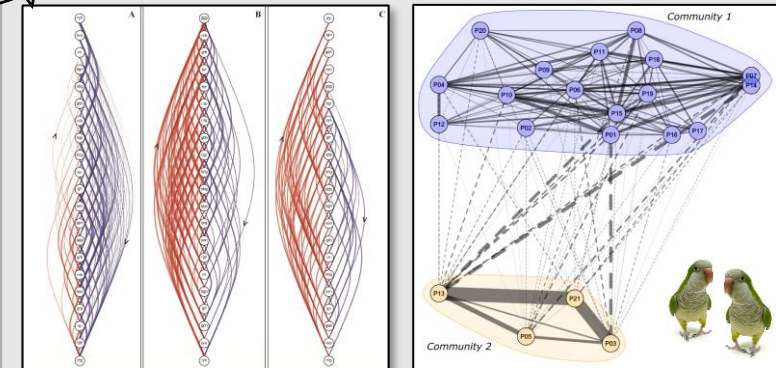
## Behavioral observations



## Experimental manipulation



## Computational modeling



# Hacking your work life to **create more time** (and **maintain your creativity**)

Maintain your health

Hack your time management

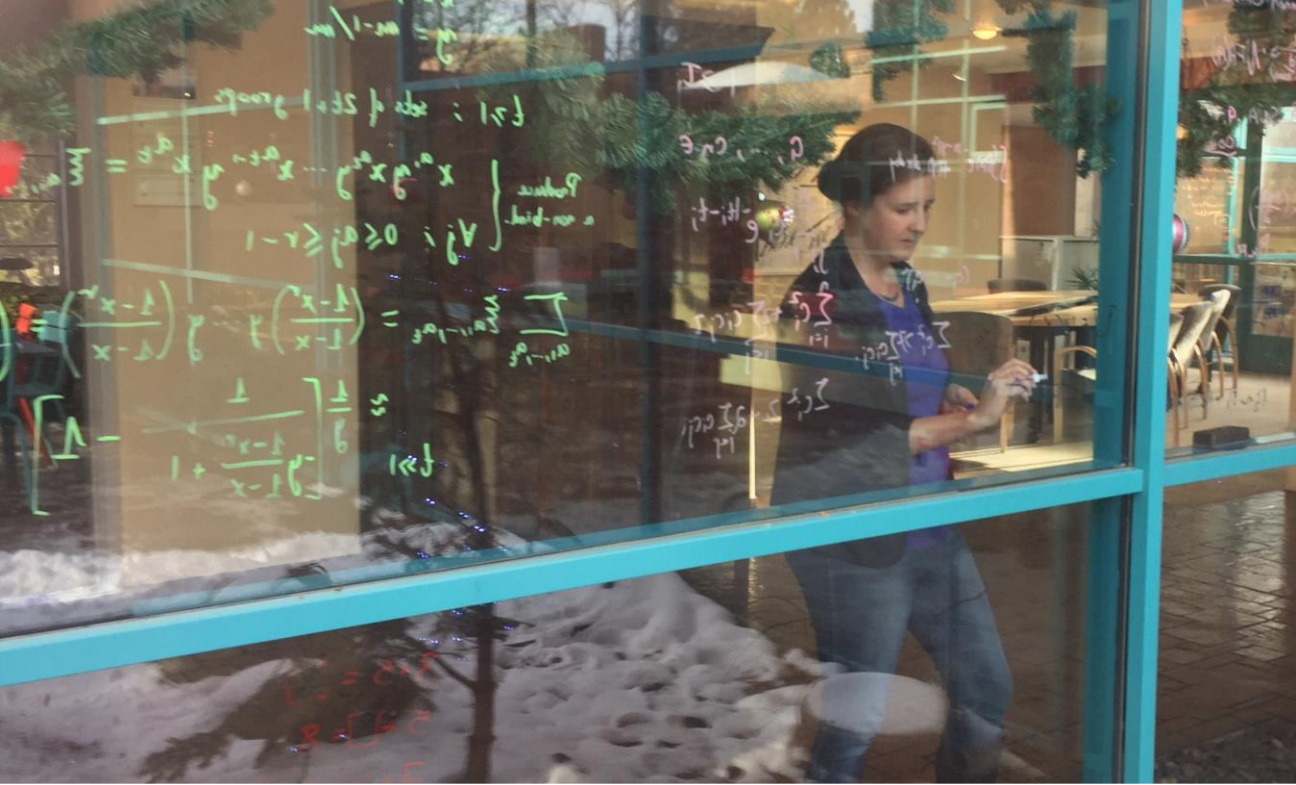
Hack your writing practice

Track, manage, and cultivate your ideas

Cultivate a good environment







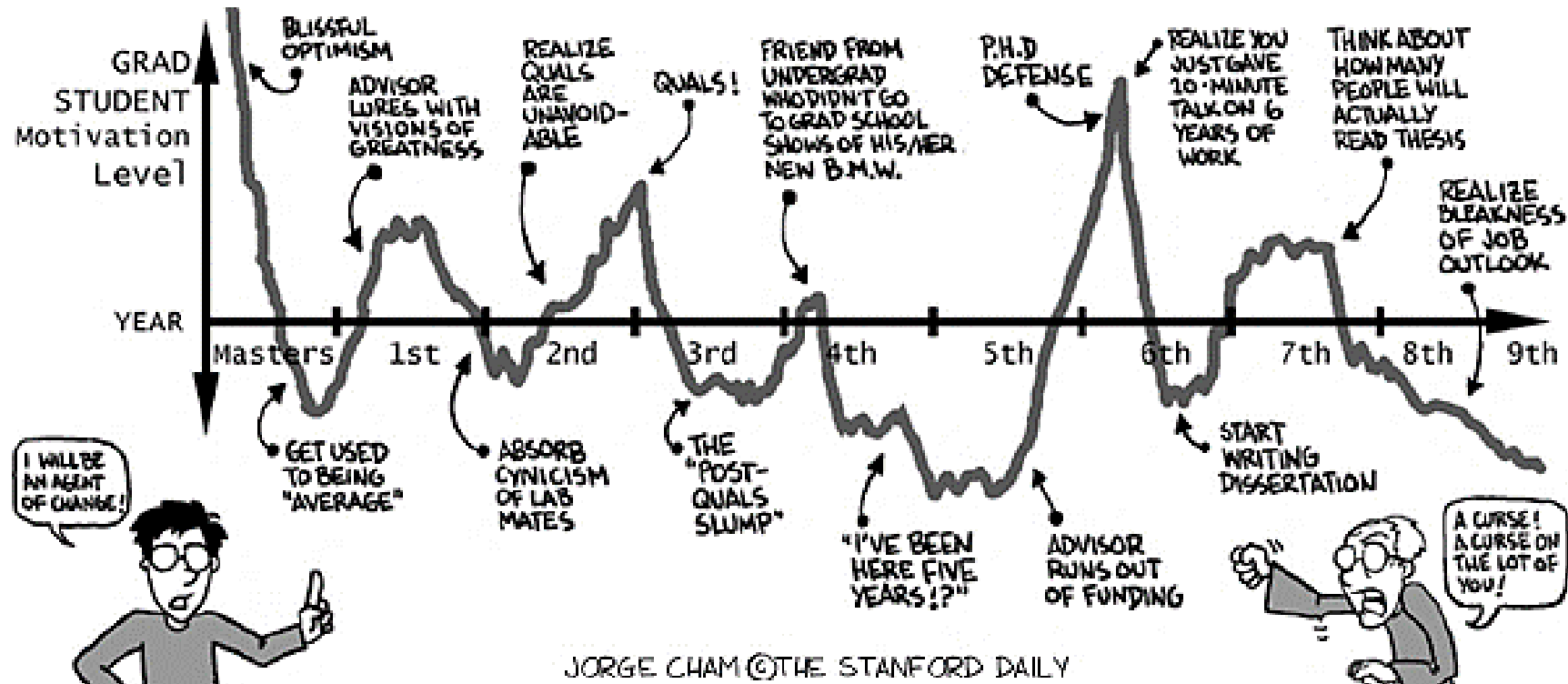


A dark blue, irregularly shaped graphic with a splatter effect, containing the text "Maintain your health". The graphic has a rough, hand-painted appearance with various shades of blue and white splatters around its edges. The text is centered within the dark blue area.

Maintain your  
health



# Academia can be overwhelming







Science can take **forever**



# The Thesis Whisperer

<https://thesiswhisperer.com/2017/03/08/how-to-stop-flipping/>

## Academic research ~ entrepreneurship / running small business

- **Problem one:** There are a lot of opportunities that could turn into nothing, so it's best to say yes to everything and deal with the possible overwork problem later
  - Leads to being over-committed
- **Problem two:** Since no one is really telling you what to do with every minute of your time, it can be hard to choose what to do next – especially if all the tasks seem equally important.
  - Makes individual days hard to organize, leading to decision fatigue and fractured attention states

**Work days are filled with activity, but you can't see deliverables**



# Mental health in academia

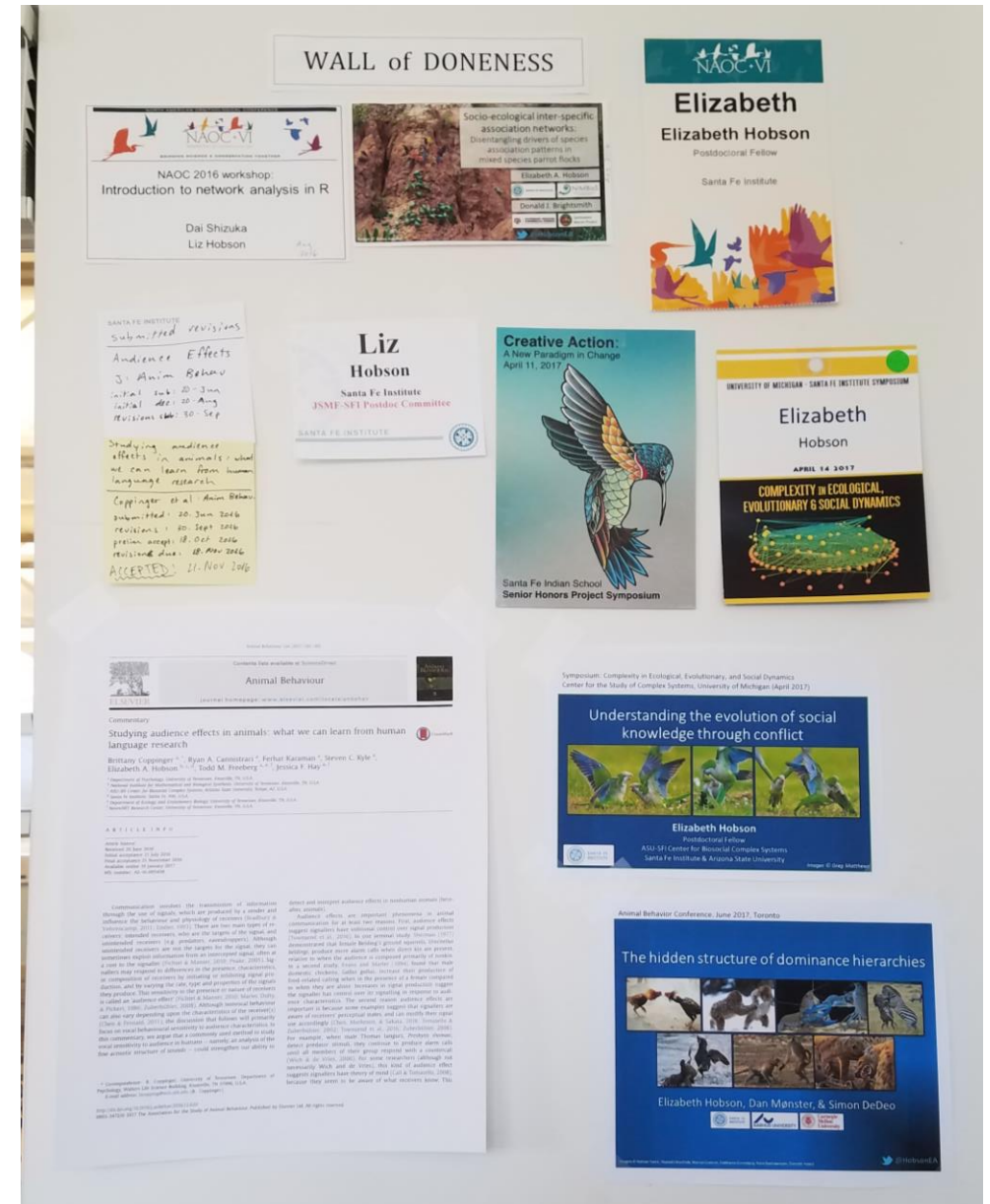
- **Talk to others you trust** about negative experiences in grad school, especially those where you feel victimized, hurt, or badly treated. Don't wait until you are overwhelmed with anger or self-loathing, or you'll be too paralyzed to stand up for yourself.
- **Monitor** your negative self beliefs.
- Replace negative beliefs **actively with positive ones**
- **Get enough exercise (and sleep!!)**
- Interact with others **about the process of your work**, not just the content (writing / science groups)
- **Take action to understand the politics, climate, and expectations** of your department and your advisor. Those who know the landscape are less likely to be taken by surprise and to fall into self-blaming habits.
- **Avoid isolation.** You are not alone, and your experiences are not as rare as you think.
- Read **positive articles about how to cope in academia**

# Celebrate successes

## Jar of Awesome



# Wall of Doneness









Hack your time  
management



# You do not **need** to work 80 hours a week to **succeed** in academia

5 15-hr days / 6 13.3-hr days / 7 11.4-hr days



“There are labs **where the principal investigator is a workaholic**, and **nobody else in the lab is allowed to have a life**” *Anthony Ryan, chemist at the University of Sheffield, UK*

“**Everyone benefits from time away from work.** You have to think about the whole person.” *Meghan Duffy, biologist at University of Michigan*

# Track your work hours

If you think you're working 80 hours a week, you'll make different choices in your attempts to optimize them than if you know you usually work 55.

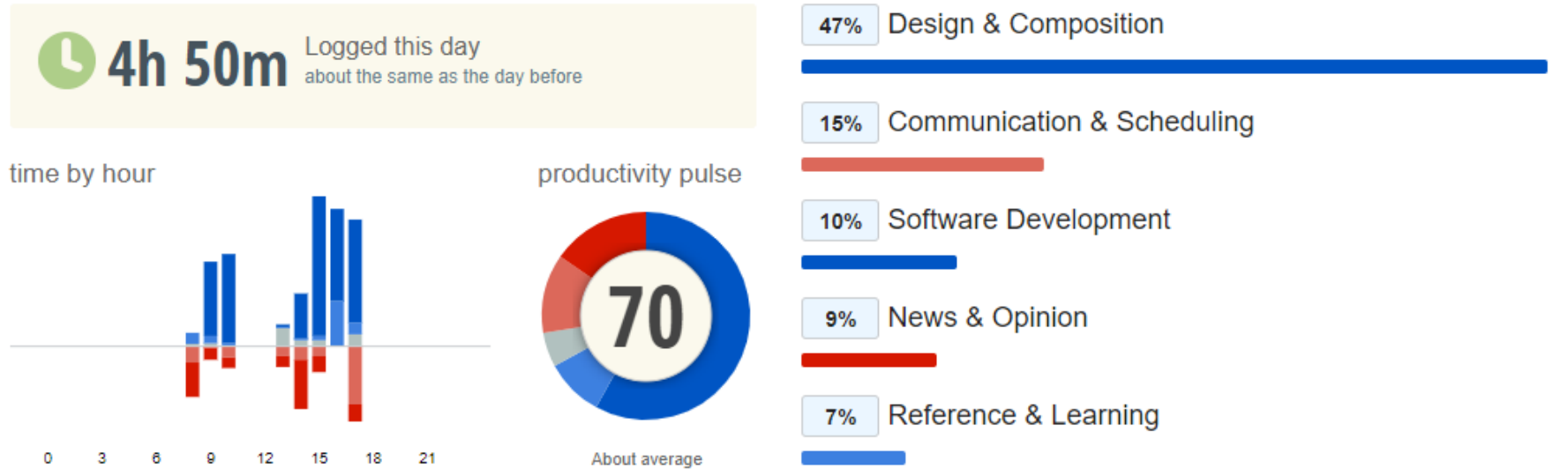
## The Truth About How Much Workaholics Actually Work

Most people grandly exaggerate the number of hours they work—and in doing so, undermine their own productivity. Here's how to track your real work time and make the most of every hour.

“People who claimed their “usual” workweeks were longer than 75 hours **were off, on average, by about 25 hours**. You can guess in which direction. Those who claimed that a “usual” workweek was 65–74 hours were off by close to 20 hours. Those claiming a workweek of 55–64 hours were still about 10 hours north of the truth.”

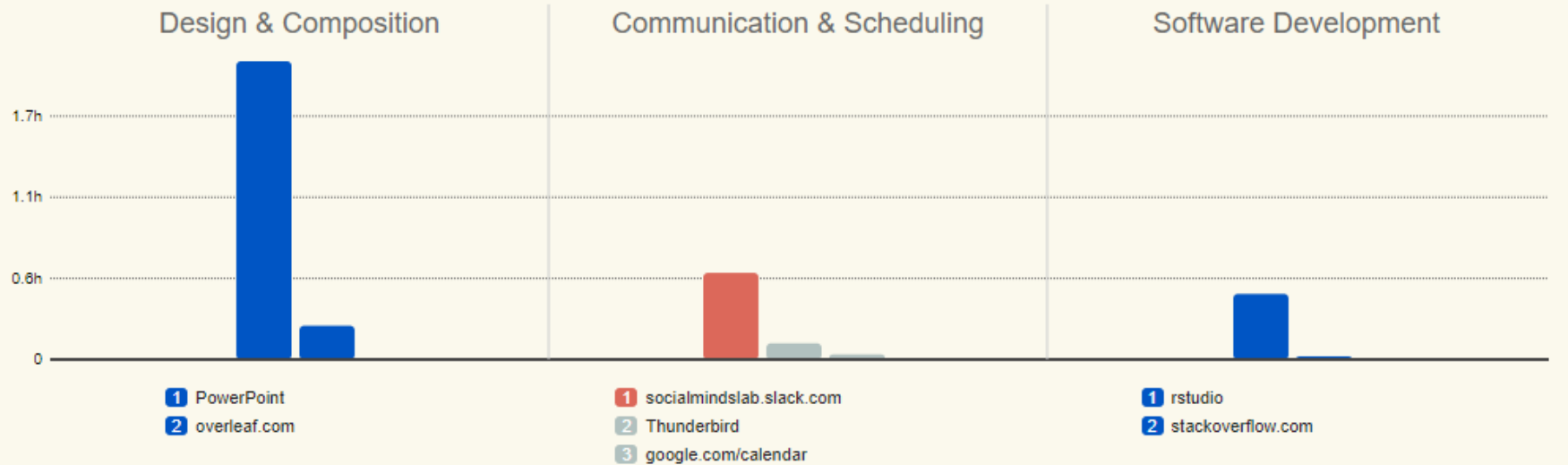


# Track your activities to see how you allocate time



Your productivity pulse this day is 5% lower than your normal average of 74.

## Spotlight on your top activities this day



# My ideal day (happy + productive)

Mix of:

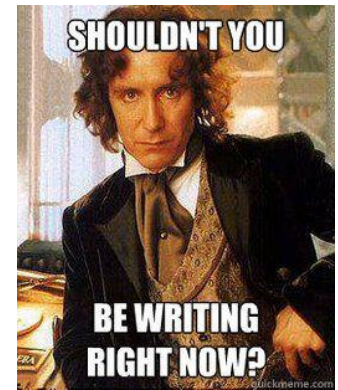
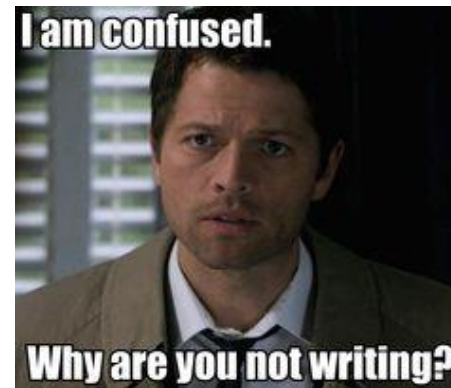
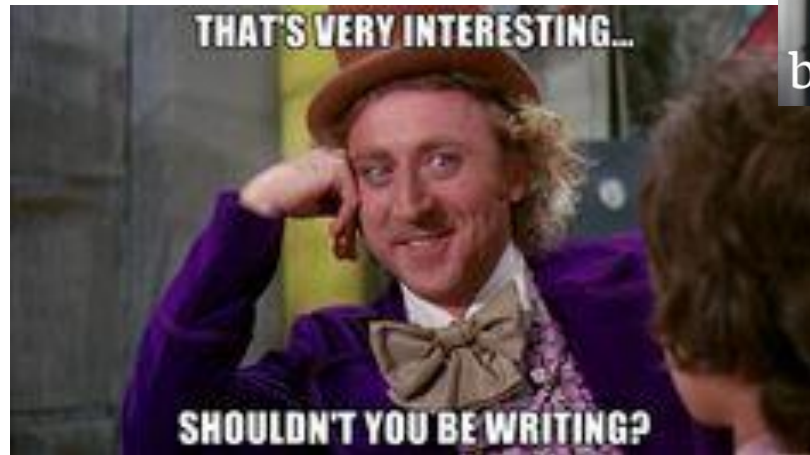
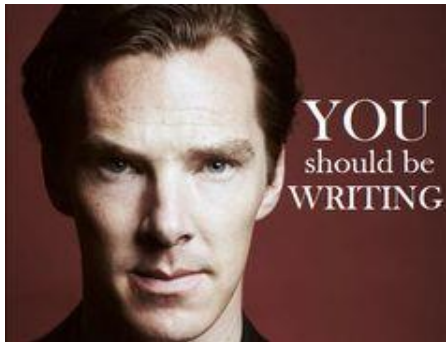
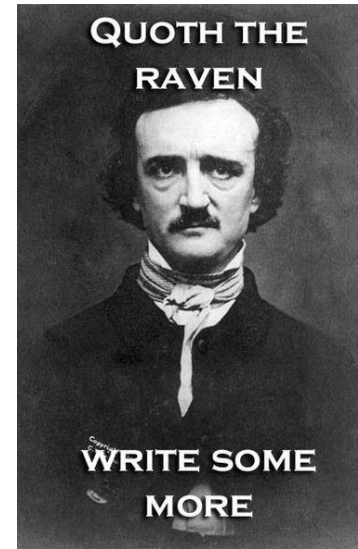
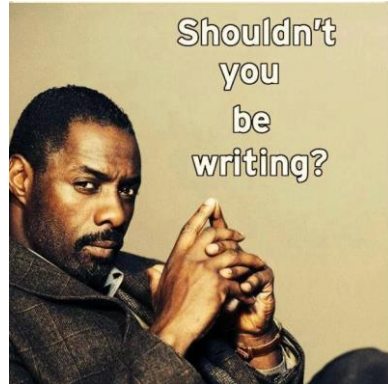
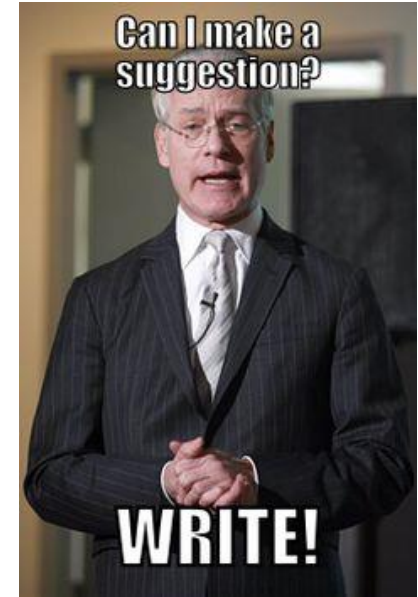
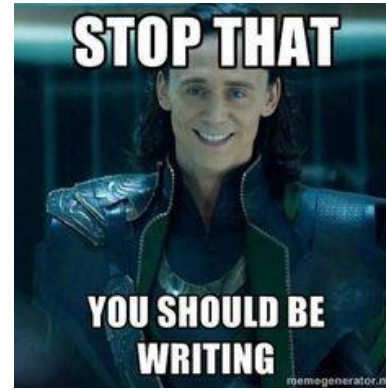
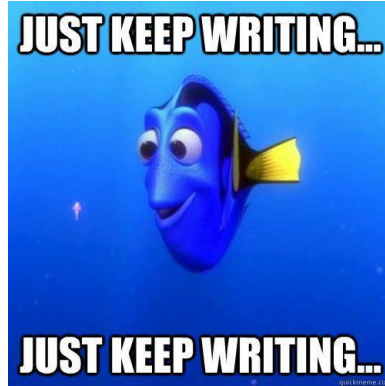
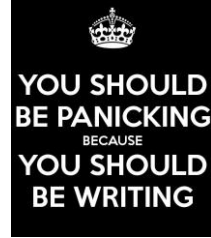
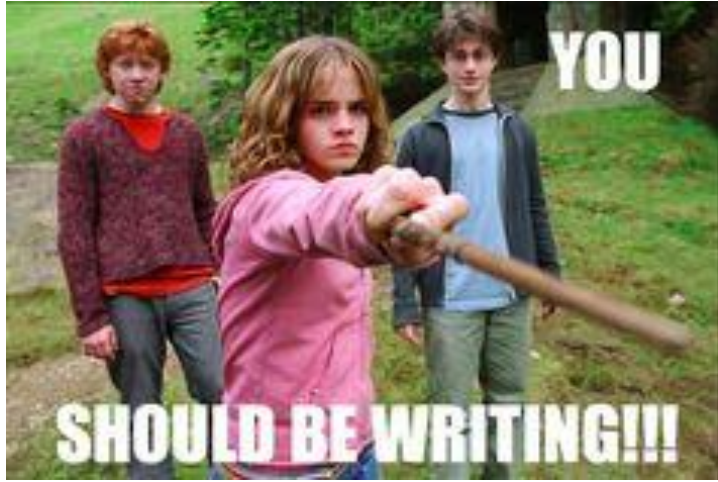
- Block of writing time → End with new section / new ideas
- Block of coding / analysis time → End coding with new plots
- Whiteboard time (creative brainstorming)
- Socializing with collaborators/coworkers (mix of science & life)



# Work guilt



# Managing work guilt





# Juggling metaphor: rubber balls vs glass balls





# Rocks / pebbles / sand metaphor



# Maker vs manager schedules

## **Manager**

Reactive

Short blocks of time

Lots of “putting out fires”

## **Maker**

Proactive

Long blocks of time

Focus deeply on few tasks

# “Getting Things Done” (GTD) - David Allen

- **Capture everything.** Your to-dos, your ideas, your recurring tasks, everything. You want to capture everything as soon as it happens so you don't have to think about it again until it's time to do it.
- **Clarify the things you have to do.** Break tasks into actionable steps
- **Organize those actionable items by category and priority.** Assign due dates where you can, and set reminders so you follow up on them. You're not actually doing any of the items on your list right now, you're just making sure they're in the right buckets for later, and your reminders are set.
- **Reflect on your to-do list.** See what your next action should be. Also, give your to-do list an in-depth review periodically to see where you're making progress, where you need to adjust your priorities, and determine how the system is working for you.
- **Engage and get to work.** Choose your next action and get to it. Your system is, as this point, set up to make figuring that out easy. Your to-dos are organized by priority and placed in categories. You know what to work on, and when. They're broken into manageable, bite-sized chunks that are easy to start. It's time to get to work.





# The Thesis Whisperer: “Write a good to-do list”

<https://thesiswhisperer.com/2017/03/08/how-to-stop-flipping/>

## Use verbs in your to-do list; keep tasks very specific

- **Do** a proper, systematic literature search
- **Download** papers that look interesting
- Shallow **read** all the 140 papers you have downloaded
- **Note** key themes
- **Start** a document with the key themes you noticed as headings
- **Make** a short list of papers you will deep read
- **Deep read** the most interesting-looking of the papers

- Read the 140 papers I downloaded last week
- Write a bunch of notes
- Write the literature review section

# THE NEXT-STEP METHOD

Todd Henry ([Accidental Creative](#) podcast)

For every to-do list item,  
write down a next step. Every time.

# How to prioritize

From: 5 Questions to Help you Prioritize your To-Do List (Liz Huber)

1. Which tasks are related to your **goals**?
2. Which tasks have the **highest impact** on your goals?
3. Which tasks make other tasks **obsolete, faster** or **easier**?
4. Which tasks did you choose **proactively**?
5. Which tasks are **Urgent** vs. **Important**? Or Both?
6. Start your day with your **Most Important Task**



# The “Eisenhower Principle”

"I have two kinds of problems: the **urgent** and the **important**. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent."

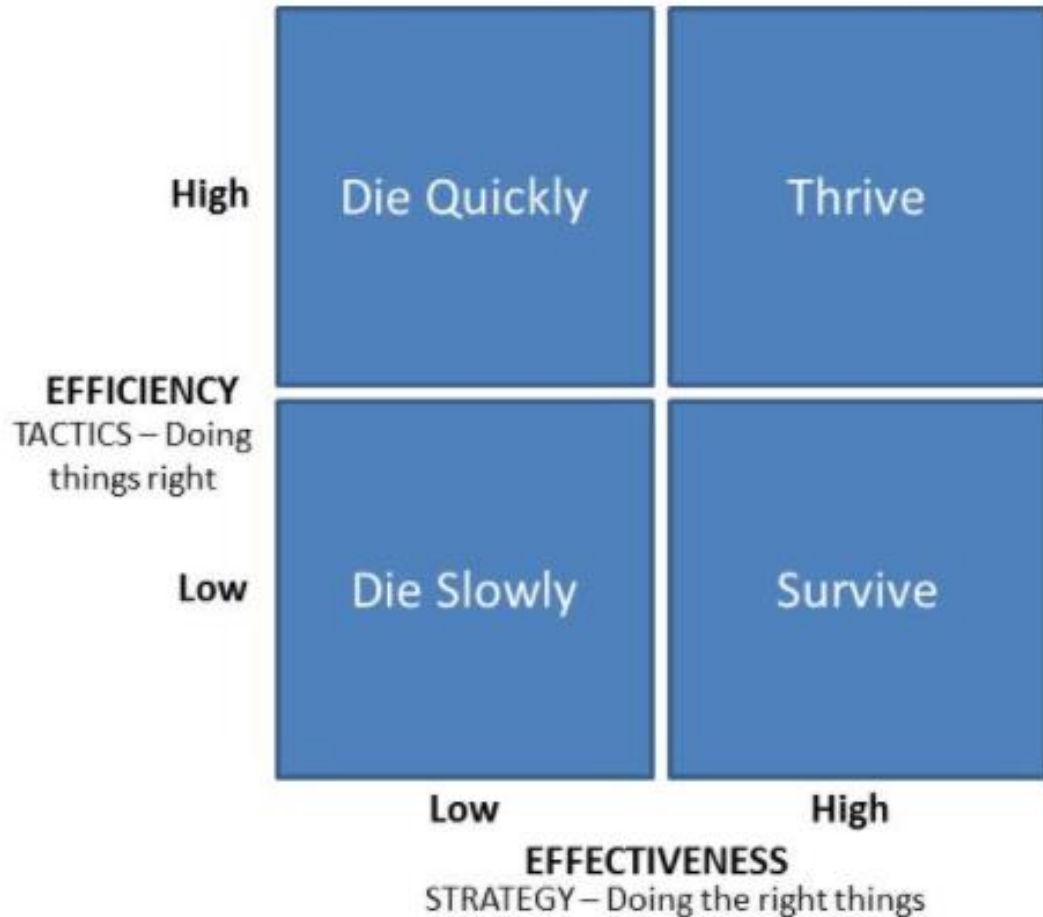
-- former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower (quoting Dr J. Roscoe Miller), 1954

	<b>Urgent</b>	<b>Not urgent</b>
<b>Important</b>	Putting out fires	***
<b>Not important</b>	Time sucks	Wasting time

# Productivity: Efficiency & Effectiveness

“Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things.”

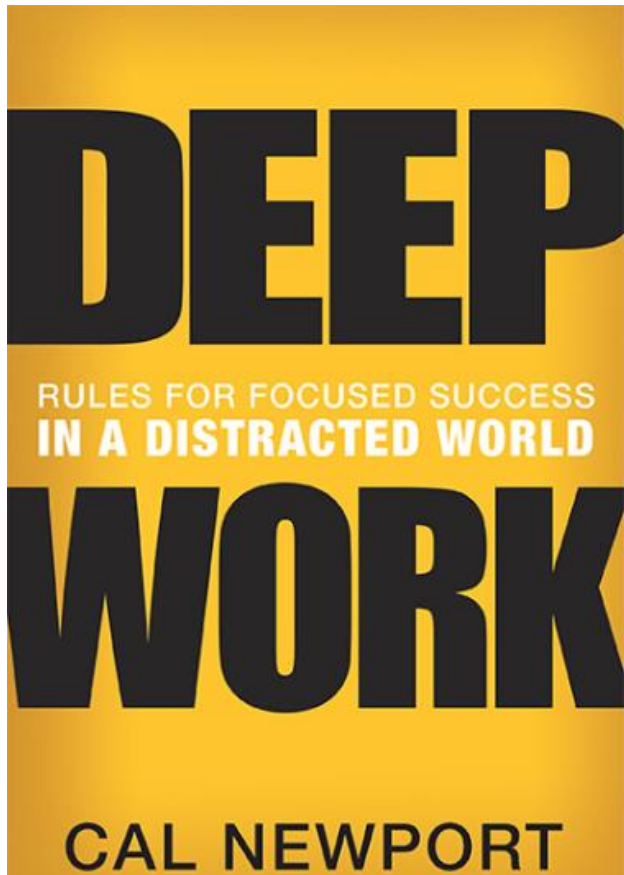
Peter Drucker



“There is nothing **so useless** as **doing efficiently** that which **should not be done at all.**”

*Peter Drucker*

# Deep work vs shallow work



“Deep work is the **ability to focus without distraction** on a cognitively demanding task.... deep work is **like a super power** in our increasingly competitive twenty-first century economy. And yet, most people have lost the ability to go deep—spending their days instead in a frantic blur of e-mail and social media”

<http://calnewport.com/books/deep-work/>

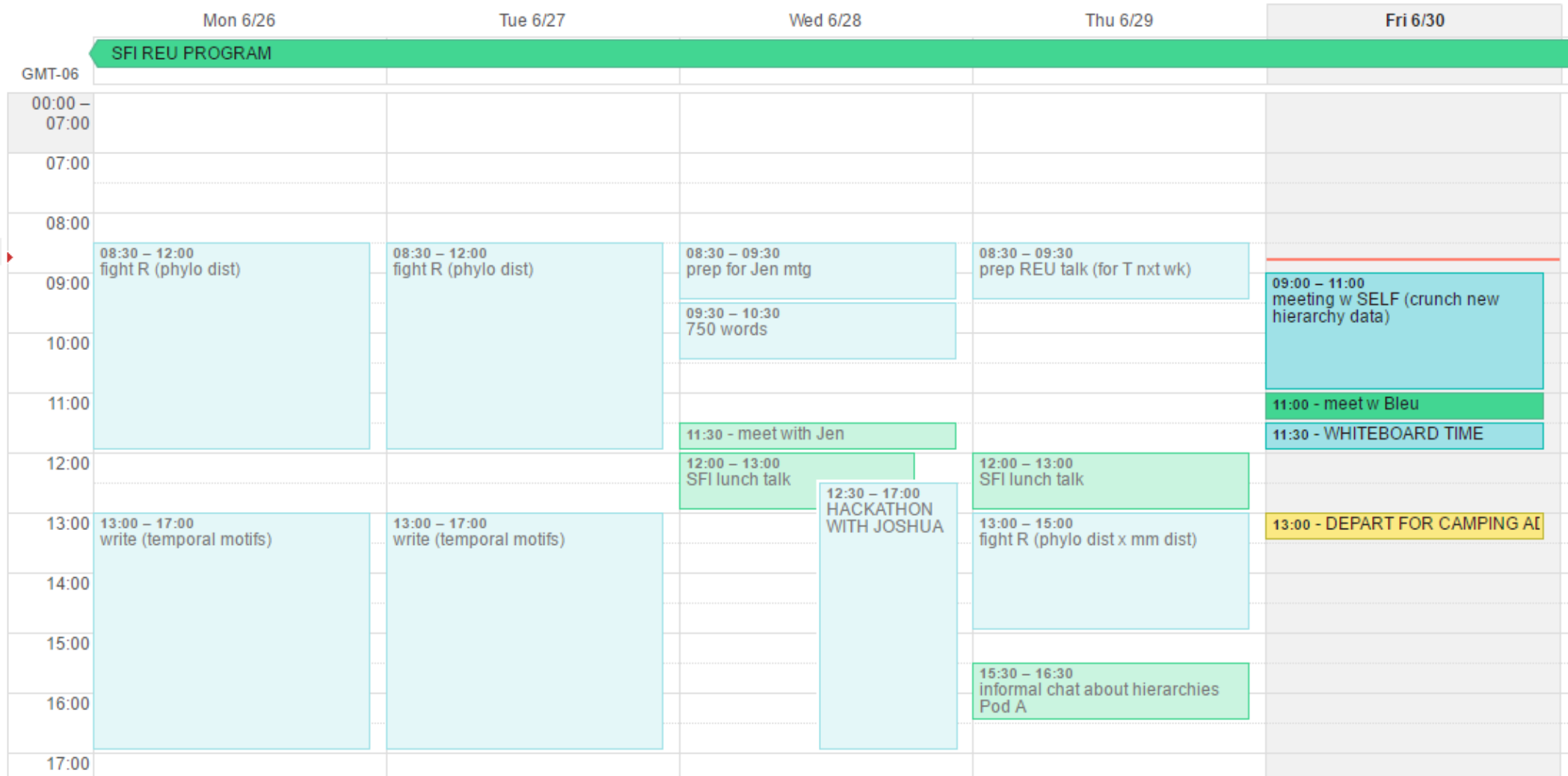


# Urgent / important task matrix

	<b>Time sensitive</b>	<b>Time insensitive</b>
<b>Deep work</b>	New analyses, writing, coding for projects with upcoming deadlines	Generating and developing new ideas & projects
<b>Shallow work</b>	Tweaking plots, formatting references, etc.	Paperwork without hard deadlines, some parts of literature review

# Scheduling tasks to preserve your ideal schedule

- **Meetings with self**
- Plan “white space” into your week
- Block time for idea generation / writing
- Pre-deadlines (complete sub tasks)



# “Eat The Frog” Method

A simple system to make consistent progress on your most important goals



Coined by Brian Tracy (<https://www.briantracy.com/blog/time-management/the-truth-about-frogs/>) after quote by Mark Twain

“Mark Twain once said that if the first thing you do each morning is to eat a live frog, you can go through the day with the satisfaction of knowing that that is probably the worst thing that is going to happen to you all day long. **Your “frog” is your biggest, most important task, the one you are most likely to procrastinate on if you don’t do something about it.**”



A dark blue, irregularly shaped graphic with a splatter effect, containing white text. The graphic is centered on a white background and has a rough, hand-painted appearance with various shades of blue and white splatters around its edges.

Track, manage, and  
cultivate your ideas

What inspires your creativity?





LD in TA + TB  
Log: longer period  
level 10

CATEGORY PREF.  
PREF TRAIT (A vs B)  
Temporal switching -  
that is process from  
and from periods  
omniscient??

II DIVERSITY  
DIVERSITY in time (and it depends on...)  
when is there consensus  
among...  
DIVERGENCE in PREFERENCE  
and make diff

III Accumulation of (corio cabinet)  
if lots of traits...  
TRAIT FREQ  
Time as the process

IV Traps (if one trait varies  
other is genetic)  
A -  
B  
End 48

## BAT GRANT:

- ① how do indiv chars corr w. coop?
- ② how do relaty dynamics affect coop?
- ③ how do mut<sup>(gen)</sup> dynamics affect coop / coop behavrs?

### Aim 4: Model stuff

\* off-shelf permutation/null models limited

\* goal:

1. develop suite/ensambel of "reference models" to compare to empirical data
2. make these framew...
3. better understand...

Stochastic dynamic game + genetic algor  
↳ too scale?  
interaction + SEEP p

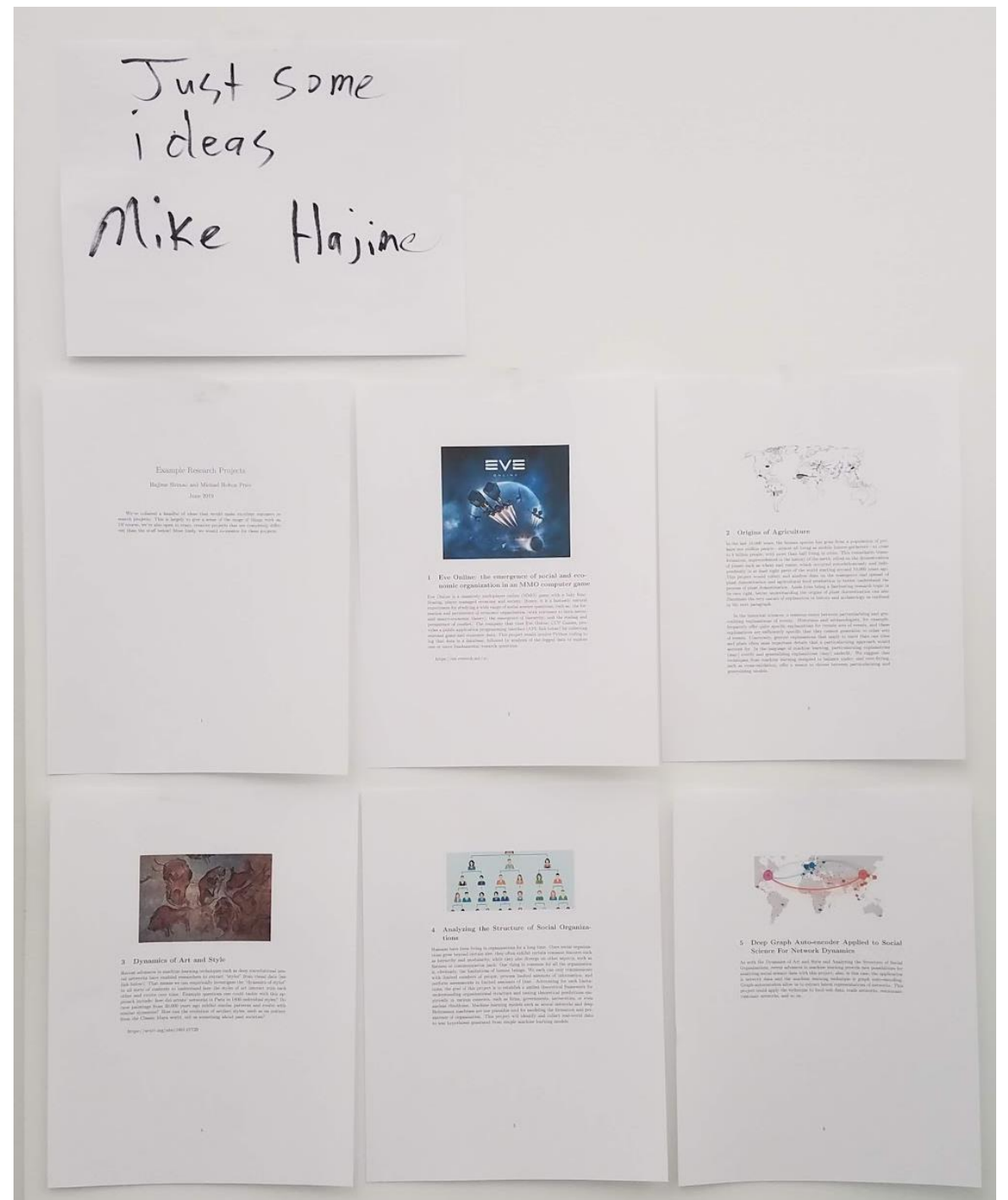




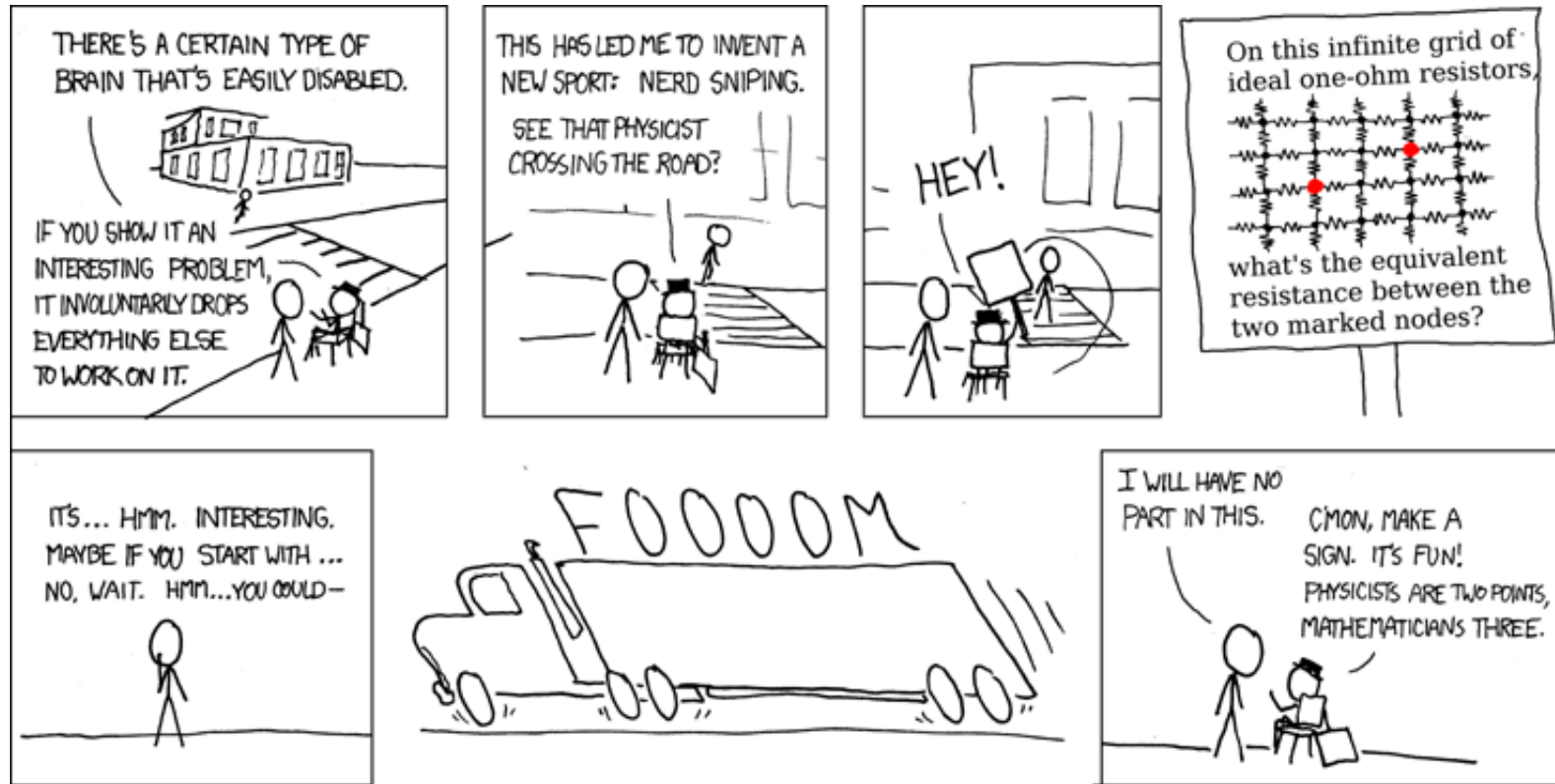
# Workshop your ideas

- Test out your “pitch”
- Find other perspectives
- Refine your logic/explanations
- Find collaborators/brainstormers

@SFI: “Research Jams”



# “Nerd snipe” other researchers to refine ideas/methods



<https://xkcd.com/356/>

FYI: At SFI, nerd sniping is **not evil** and more about **requesting someone's help with a cool problem**. It is good practice to ask "**can I nerd snipe you about something**" before engaging in nerd sniping



# Keep aware balancing breadth of input & depth of development



<https://www.etsy.com/listing/1155666960/saying-no-to-things-punch-card-pack-of-5>

# Project pipeline method for consistent output


The image shows a Trello board titled "PROJECT PIPELINE" with a teal background. The board is organized into columns representing different stages of a project pipeline. Each column contains cards representing individual tasks or projects, with some cards having labels like "PRIORITY", "OUT OF MY HANDS", "PRIMARY", "SECONDARY", and "SIDE PROJECTS".

**Columns and Cards:**

- DEAD:** -- I: Coupled tipping points (Oikos 22Nov)
- FROZEN:** Monk global trade; I: TREE biological complexity UTK WG w Todd/Nina (02May); I: feedback & social knowledge; T: Ritu RHP model (w Matt)
- ON DECK:** Rules at indiv vs group level; R: 2020-12: Chapter for Todd w Gerry; SI: 100 years of dominance ENQUIRY
- Analyzing:** T: Mate choice copying w Emily/Courtney/Maria; PRIORITY; OUT OF MY HANDS
- Writing:** R/I: Null models in networks; PRIORITY; BR: Thinking like a parrot; OUT OF MY HANDS
- Editing:** E: Ants,ants,ants CNWW group; PRIORITY; R: Fisher review; OUT OF MY HANDS
- IN REVISION:** E: Heuristics & hierarchies w SD/DM RtoR DUE 19Dec; PRIORITY; T: Evo assessment strategies w Eleanor; OUT OF MY HANDS; E: SCMA mvt w Don
- IN REVIEW:** PRIMARY; E/M: Multilevel networks special issue w lab group; SECONDARY; SIDE PROJECTS
- BACK IN REVIEW:** PRIMARY; SECONDARY; SIDE PROJECTS
- IN PRESS:** (Empty)
- PUBLISHED:** PRIMARY; I: 2019-summer Rethinking animal social complexity w complex systems concepts; R: Social hierarchy in animal societies (Proof 04Oct); SECONDARY; SIDE PROJECTS

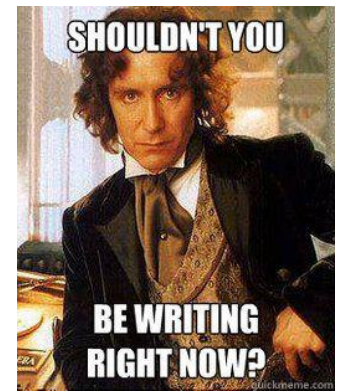
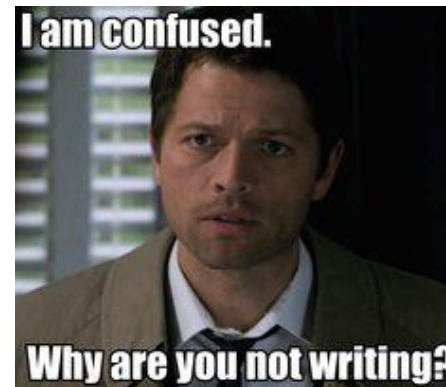
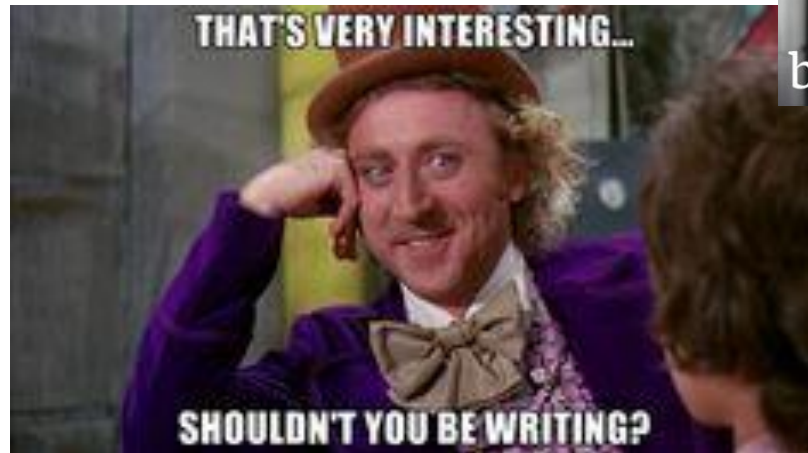
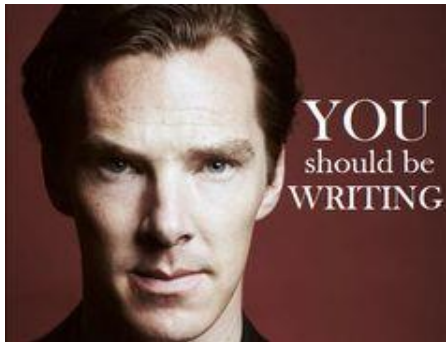
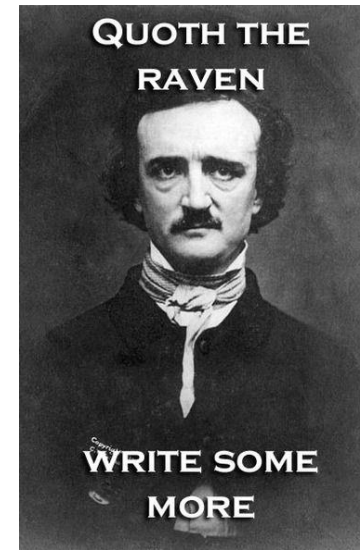
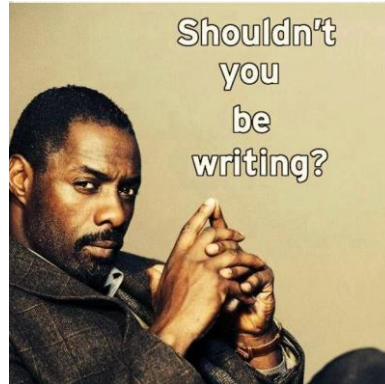
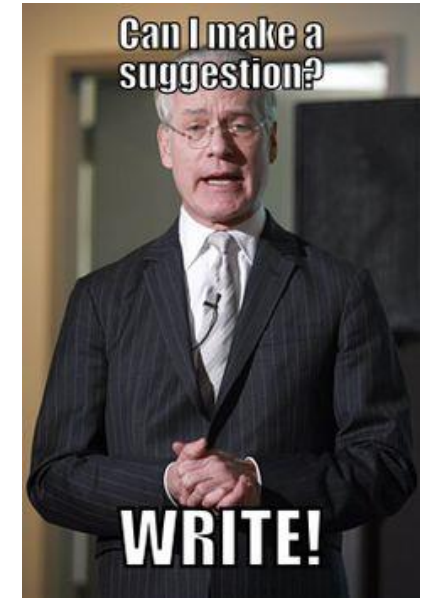
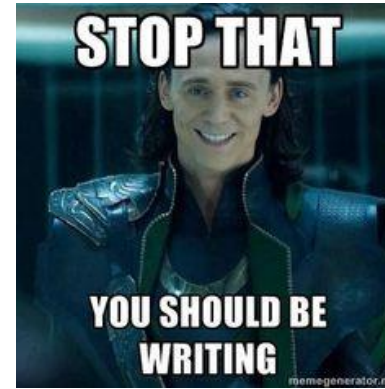
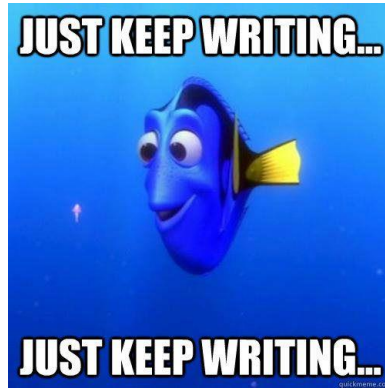
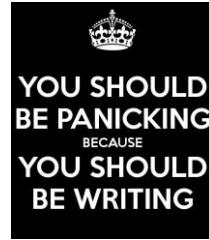
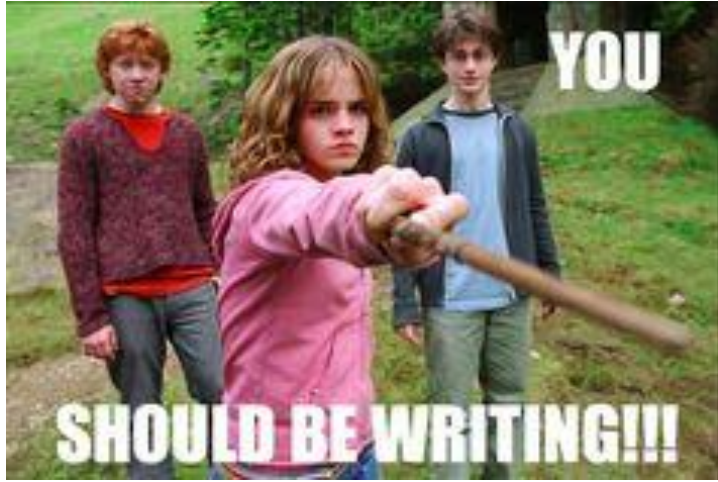
Navigation and UI elements include "Boards", "Personal", "Private", "Invite", "Butler (20 Tips)", and "Show Menu" in the top right corner.





Hack your  
writing  
process

# Hack your writing process





# Framing your writing

- Why is this research interesting and important?
- What are the driving research questions? (**Make these general**)
  - “We don’t know this yet” / “No one has studied this topic/spp yet” **is a very flimsy justification**
- What will your discoveries do for your field of study / conservation / society / etc?
- What is previously known, where are the gaps in knowledge, and **what new work would you need to do to fill those gaps?**
  - **Don’t surprise your readers**, give them hints on where you are going (no murder mysteries in science!!)

# Baby-werewolf-silver bullet writing method

Andrew Hendry: <http://ecoevoevoeco.blogspot.com/2014/10/how-to-writepresent-science-baby.html>



“As an editor, reviewer, supervisor, committee member, and colleague, I have read countless papers and proposals and have seen similarly countless presentations. Some work well and some don’t. Beyond the picky details of slides that are too wordy, speaking that is too fast, sentences that are poorly constructed, and so on – **the most critical problem is making clear why the work is interesting and important.** Why should we read further rather than moving to the next paper on the pile? Why should we give you money as opposed to your competitor? Why should we listen to your talk instead of tweeting about the party last night? This **simple and yet pervasive inability to engage the reader and have them buy into your work is likely the single greatest flaw in the writing of every student** (and many postdocs and faculty members). In this post, I will explain a simple metaphor that can help you to solve this problem in each and every one of your papers/proposals/presentations.”

# Topic/structural questions as an outline

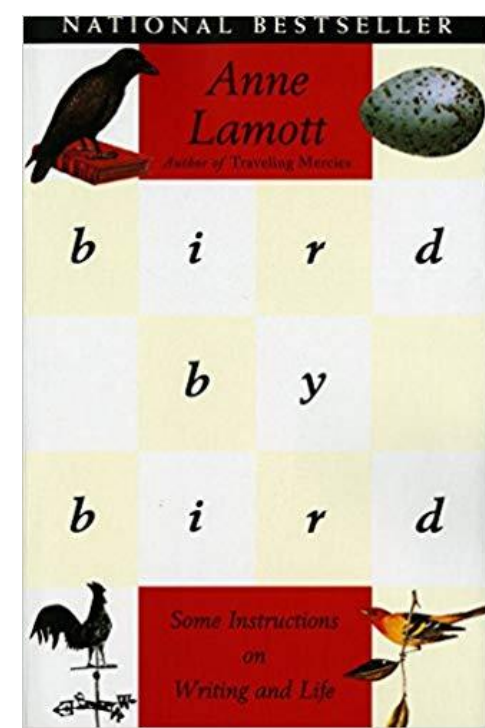
- For each paragraph, write out the question that that paragraph will answer
- Intro:
  - **What is the main topic** (what do your readers critically need to know?) and **why is it important?** (the “baby”)
  - **What gaps do we need to fill and how would that help?** (the “werewolf”)
  - How will your work add to our knowledge? What is the main point of the paper? (the “silver bullet”)
- When you write, just answer the question for each paragraph

# The “Shitty First Draft” Method

(inspired by Ernest Hemingway, popularized by Anne Lamott)

“The first draft is the child’s draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp all over the place knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later.”

*Get words out of your head into digital form as quickly as you can. Then they concretely exist and you can mess with them*





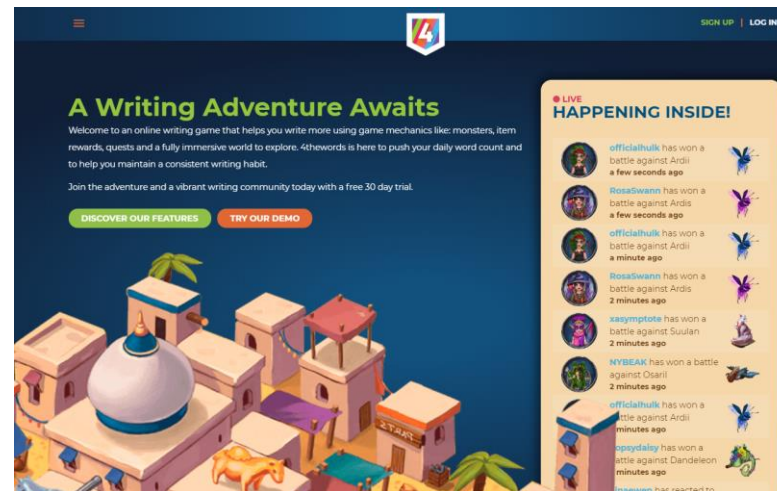
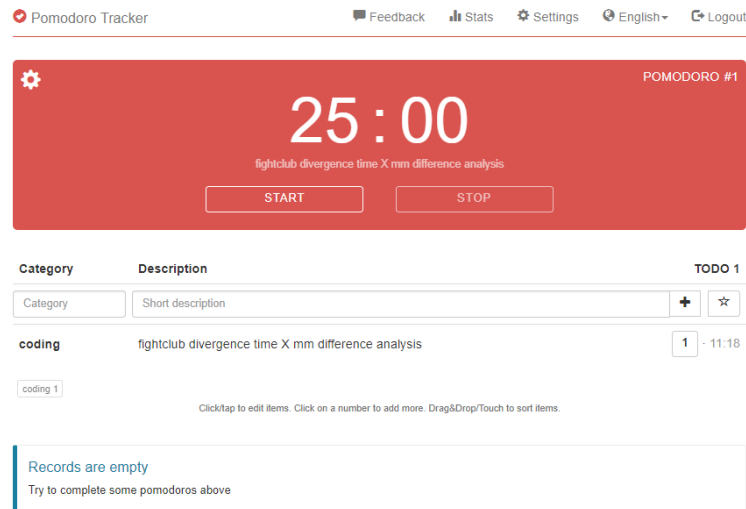
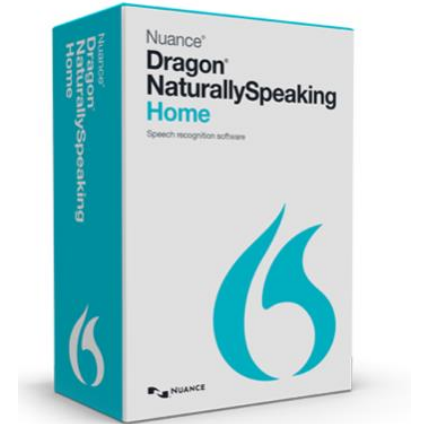
# Be wary of perfectionism

Perfectionism → Procrastination → Paralysis



# Writing sprints can reduce your inner editor

Sprints: <https://teralynnchilds.com/word-sprints/>



[pomodoro-tracker.com](https://pomodoro-tracker.com)

[4thewords.com](https://4thewords.com)

For more advice, I highly recommend  
Raul Pacheco-Vega's blog

**[www.raulpacheco.org/tag/academic-writing/](http://www.raulpacheco.org/tag/academic-writing/)**





Cultivate a good  
environment

# Design your work space to work for you



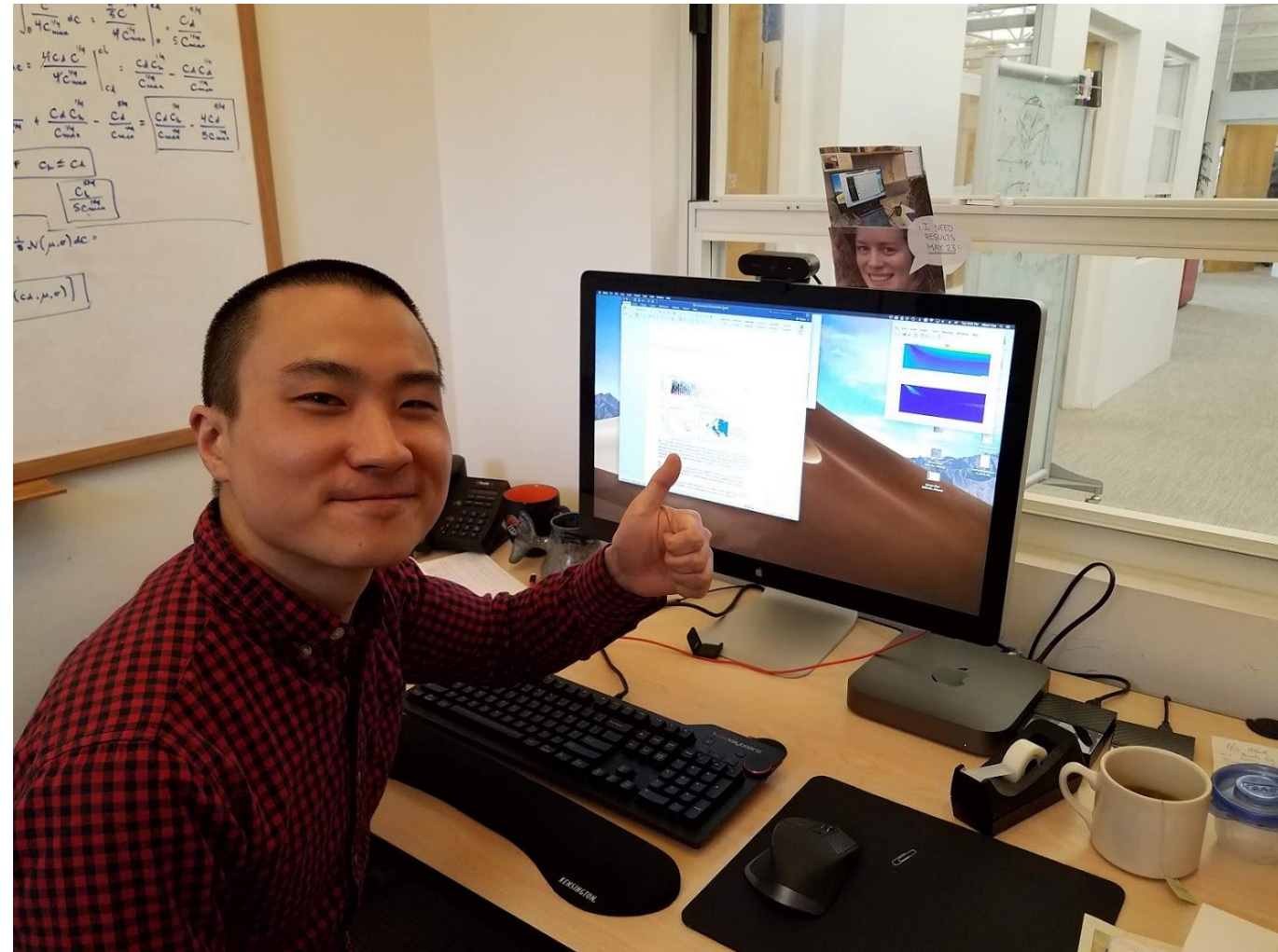
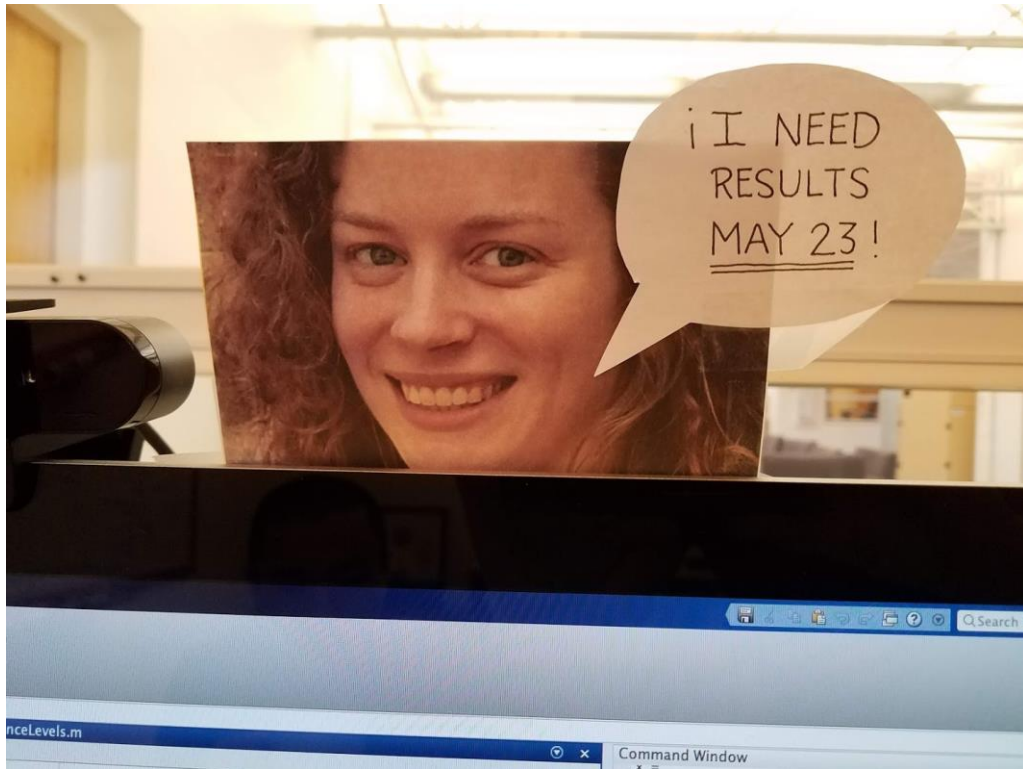


Cultivate good work/collaborator relationships





# Find an accountability partner



# Think carefully about your mentoring needs

“Your relationship with your advisor is a huge deal,” says Galen Panger, a PhD candidate in the School of Information. “It almost can’t be understated when it comes to the correlation between your advisor relationship and your wellbeing and satisfaction in graduate school.”









# MENTORING NETWORK



# Hacking your work life to create more time (and maintain your creativity)

Maintain your health

## Work on physical & mental health

Exercise, commiserate, celebrate successes, manage expectations/guilt

Hack your time management

## Figure out how you work best

Prioritize efficacy, don't get bogged down in busy work, keep big picture in mind

Track, manage and cultivate your ideas

## Promote creativity, save future ideas to come back to

Collaborate, nerd snipe, don't get stuck in a perfectionism spiral

Hack your writing process

## Get words on page faster, edit afterwards

Plan your writing process & structure your goals

Cultivate a good environment

## Find/create/maintain an environment that supports you

Creativity & productivity in science are much easier and enjoyable when you are happy and supported