

Editorial

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Textbook Writing in the Academic World - More Than Meets the Eye

Authorship of textbooks is a demanding endeavor compared to journal article writing. It requires tremendous effort, extreme patience, and is time-consuming. Many authors embark with enormous enthusiasm but end up abandoning their projects due to the many obstacles they encounter, particularly in textbook writing.

As an academician, we are not only involved in teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate students but also, supervising students, serving as examiners—as well as conducting research. Some academics must carry out administrative tasks as well. These tasks collectively contribute to the advancement of an individual's career. The university's latest promotion criteria highlight that each academic should publish academic textbooks, preferably single-authored ones, in addition to journal articles. As academics are forced to venture into this field, I wish to highlight some personal observations that assisted me in my journey.

Firstly, select a well-known and reputable publisher available locally or internationally. Ensure to read through their policies and do not be alarmed by their textbook publication guidelines. These are designed to be robust in order to ensure the quality of a published book. The author must choose a subject of their expertise to write on and then prepare the outline for the textbook. If you are unfamiliar with preparing an outline, you can refer to other available textbooks. The outline might be updated from time to time depending on current research findings. The author should also include a special element in the textbook for marketing purposes. The special element can be the learning outcome of each chapter, Islamic input related to the subject matter, or practical element in the textbook.¹ These special elements make the textbook distinct from the other available books and have the potential to attract diverse categories of readers.

A simple method to begin your task is to convert your set of lecture notes into the content of your textbook and, the *Physiology of the Respiratory System* textbook is one such exemplar.¹ Then, start expanding the teaching points into sentences. The author must avoid long and overbearing sentences; the aim here is to make the reader comprehend the subject matter lucidly. The author must construct original sentences or rephrase the sentences to avoid plagiarism. This is one of the deterring factors in writing textbooks, which makes most academics reluctant in pursuing this task²

Images and tables are the key factors to attract readers. Hand-drawn images, digital images, and tables facilitate the explanation of the subject in the textbook.¹ Image captions taken from other textbooks must follow the standard protocol. Permission from the respective author must be obtained, and payment may be needed to utilize it. This requirement could cost more, where the budget for textbook writing is borne solely by the author. Thus, authors are advised to redraw the images or tables used in the textbook to save cost. The author can seek the assistance of students who are good at graphics and coloring to redraw the images needed in the textbook. The student can be compensated by paying an honorarium, which is beneficial to both parties. The author must state the source of the adapted images or tables in the textbook.¹

The author should utilize bold or italic fonts to emphasize the main points of the textbook content.² Quizzes, multiple true-false questions, short notes, or long essay questions together with the answers are important elements to be added in the book. The students can test their understanding of the subject matter after reading each chapter. The acronym element that is mentioned during the lectures can also be added to the content of the textbook. These tips would enhance the quality of your book compared to other available textbooks. All reference materials utilized in the textbook writing must be added to the references section in the chapters of your book.

It is imperative that the author maintain the momentum of consistent book writing, by allotting time on a daily basis; the duration can be a minimum of 30 minutes to an hour. The best time to write is when the author is alert and fresh, preferably in the morning. Some authors prefer to write at late night when it's peaceful and calm. It is advisable to stay away from gadget distraction while writing. Breakers are strongly recommended to avoid writer's block. Textbook writing demands perseverance, and the process helps the brain and mind to be focused. Maintain a positive mind throughout the writing period till you succeed.

I hope the observations I have shared here will benefit academicians in their desire to write a textbook despite its many challenges. In conclusion, I would like to end with a quote that provided immense impetus in my textbook writing journey. *“Don't aim for success if you want it, just do what you love and believe in, and it will come naturally- David Frost”*.

REFERENCE

1. Abdul Rahim, R. (2018). Physiology Of The Respiratory System, (IIUM Press); ISBN: 9789674184629.
2. Sternberg, R. J. (2017). Why It Is So Hard for Academics to Write Textbooks. Psychology Teaching Review, 23(1), 79-84.

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