

Editorial ► Just Write!

Marc B. Taub, OD, MS, Memphis, Tennessee



In my tenure as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Behavioral Optometry* and *Optometry & Visual Performance* and editor of *Visual Diagnosis and Care of the Patient with Special Needs* and two upcoming volumes of *Vision Therapy: Success Stories from Around the World* (being brought to you by the Optometric Extension Program Foundation as

part of your membership, by the way), I have heard almost every excuse under the sun for not writing. “I have nothing to say,” “I am not a good writer,” “I do not have the time,” and “I do not have access to reference materials” are some of the more common pretexts. I am here to call you all out and say: just write!

My past residents, now close to 25 of them, have all heard me utter this statement many times. When asked how they should start a paper or presentation, or what they should include, my typical response is “just write.” Yes, this drives them insane, but I give the same advice to those who I am mentoring in the COVD Fellowship process. I am now passing on the same advice to you: just write!

I have to admit that I was a poor excuse for a writer when Andy Gurwood took me on as a project during my second year of optometry school. With the help of my wife, an excellent writer and my first editor, I have developed better writing skills. She will testify that it took many drafts of many papers over many years. Just write!

Writing is a process. I remember the first review of my Master’s thesis. There was so much red ink on the paper that I thought the reviewer had stabbed himself since it was so poorly written. After almost throwing up—and putting the papers in a drawer for six months, much to the chagrin of my advisor—I looked at the comments in a calmer fashion and agreed with 90% of what was written. I made the changes and learned from the experience. While the review process can be

daunting, it only serves to build the paper, making it stronger. Just write!

I come from a long line of developmental editors starting with Irwin Suchoff and am happy to carry that mantle. Regardless of the quality of the English, grammar, or paper organization, I love to work with authors to help them in bringing their thoughts out, making papers stronger. This may take several drafts over many months, but as long as the author and I are working together, I rarely let a project go. Yes, this takes time and dedication, but I consider it an honor to help in the process. Just write!

Articles can take different forms in *Optometry & Visual Performance*. Of course you have the research studies, literature reviews, and case reports, but the limits of what to write about and how to write about it sit not with the editors but with the authors. If you have always performed vision therapy a certain way, just write! If you have wanted to walk down the philosophical pathway, just write! If you figured out a unique examination or therapy technique, just write! All of the above article types are needed if we are going to move forward together. Just write!

As for time and access to reference materials, I can assist with the materials, but you will have to make the time. If you need an article, let me know, and I can probably find it in the SCO library and scan you a copy. I won’t even make you pay for my time! Time is not something I have to spare. Between raising two children, being chief of the vision therapy service and a co-residency supervisor at SCO, as well as editing *Optometry & Visual Performance* and several books, I am tapped out. But if you want to write, make the time for it. Block off an hour one morning a week and make sure you are left alone. Go to a coffee shop or lock your office door if need be! If you have always wanted to write up that great case, it will not write itself! For goodness sake, just write!

Now that I have discussed and erased your possible excuses, I have one more thing to say: just write!

Good luck and good health always.