

BASE Exercise from *Air & Light & Time & Space* by Helen Sword

(For unlimited access to the book via the library: <https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/981125961>)

In this book, Helen Sword set out to catalog characteristics of successful academic writers. She interviewed 100 academic writers and editors from around the world and collected 1,223 questionnaire responses. Her range of criteria for success is impressive,¹ providing a nuanced picture of successful writing. The results were surprising.

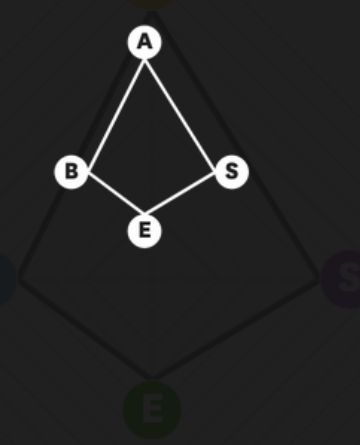
Successful academics produce in all sorts of ways. Contrary to the field's best practice in that prescribes routinized (preferably daily) writing, people wrote at all different times of days, for different amounts of time, and with different processes. Two insights from her work are that each writer has an individual best process that needs to be discovered and refined, and that successful writers generally utilize four types of habits—behavioral, artisanal, social, and emotional. Concurrently, she developed a heuristic to measure these as the first step in gaining understanding in order to recognize vital areas for improvement.

To begin, take a few moments to read from the first indentation on pg. 4 to the end of pg. 6 on the pages at the end of this handout. Then, visit: <http://writersdiet.com/base.php> and complete the diagnostic BASE exercise to see your measurements on the four characteristics. Once completed, you will receive an assessment that will guide you to which parts of the book will be most useful for you. It will look something like this:

Your result: The Mountain

The Mountain profile indicates that you have given yourself a relatively high rating (6 or above) for your Artisanal Habits but low or moderate ratings (5 or below) for your Behavioral, Social, and Emotional Habits. You feel skilful and articulate as a writer; however, you often struggle to make time for your writing, you tend to work in social isolation, and the writing process mostly brings you more anxiety and frustration than joy. To broaden the BASE upon which your writing practice is built, consider drawing on your confidence and skill as a craftsman to establish a more productive daily routine, widen your social horizons, and find greater pleasure in writing. For help in getting started, see especially Parts 1, 3, and 4 of *Air & Light & Time & Space: How Successful Academics Write*, which offers practical exercises, inspiring examples, and recommendations for further reading.

b=4, A=8, s=5, e=3



¹ Sword, Helen. 2017. *Air & Light & Time & Space: How Successful Academics Write*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, pg. 2.