



# Getting ready to write a paper

**Professor Mark Tully**

Professor of Public Health

School of Medicine

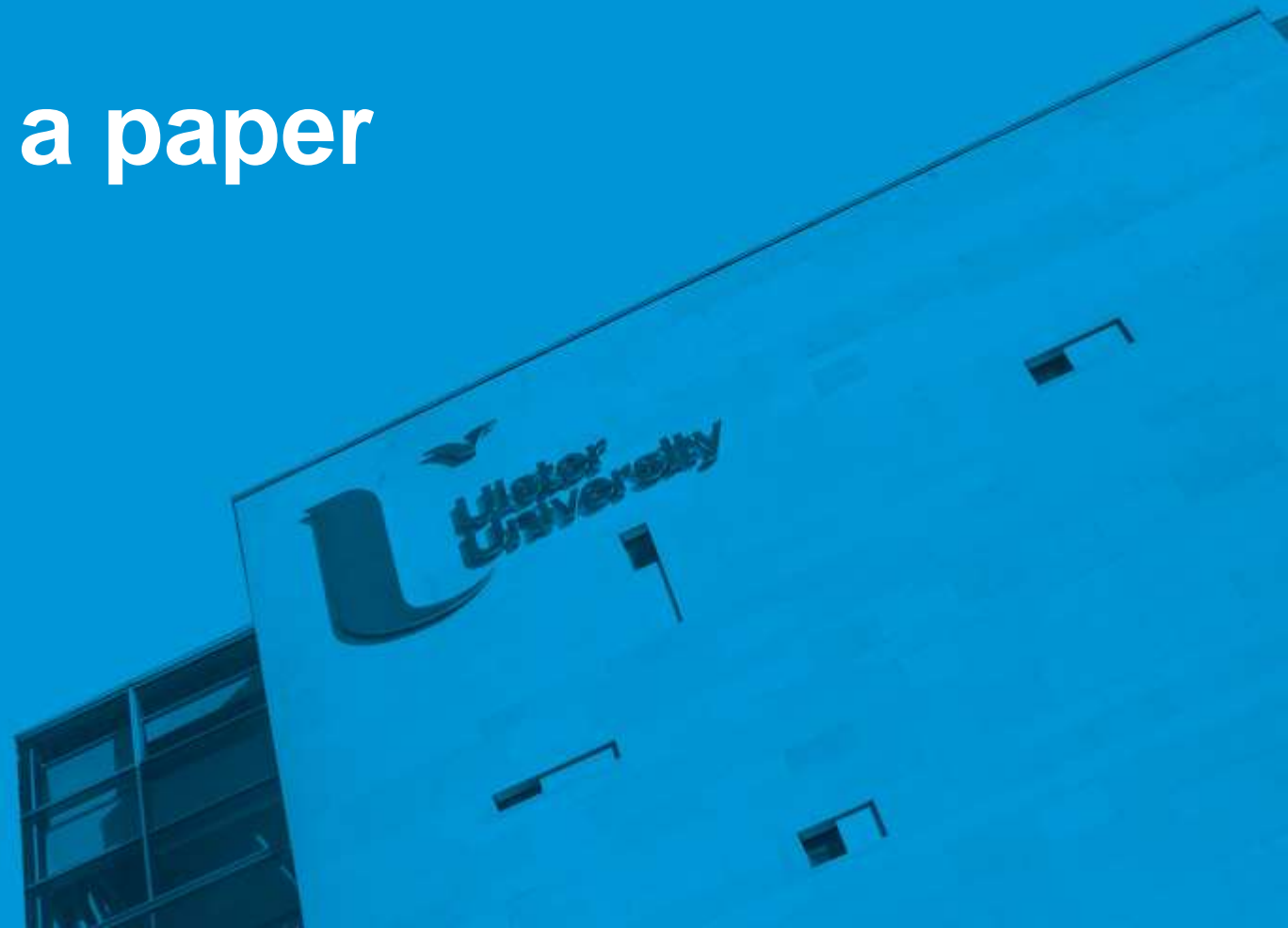
Ulster University, Northern Ireland



[m.tully@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.tully@ulster.ac.uk)



[@MarkATully](https://twitter.com/MarkATully)





THE SECRET TO GETTING AHEAD  
IS GETTING

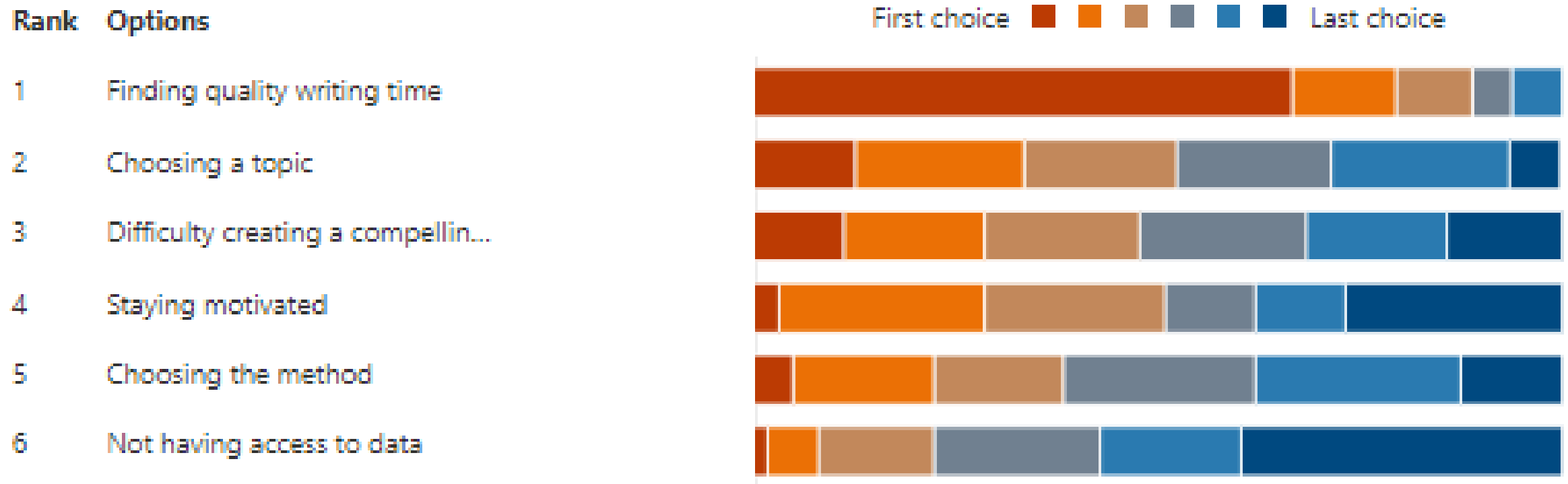
**STARTED.**

---

Mark Twain

---

# Rank these common barriers to writing in the order that you experience them





# EXERCISE

Some motivation required.

# Finding your motivation

Why are you writing a paper?

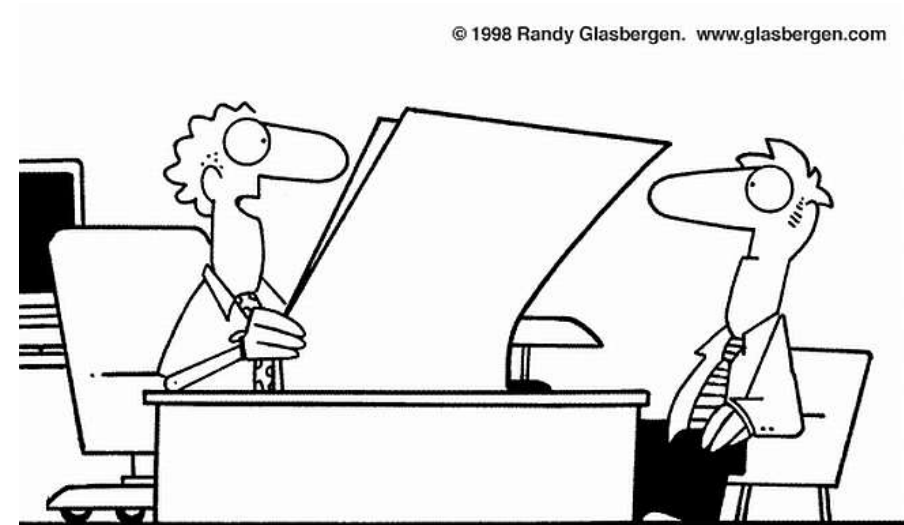
To be recognised/validated

For your CV?

Because you have something to say

Address a problem/issue

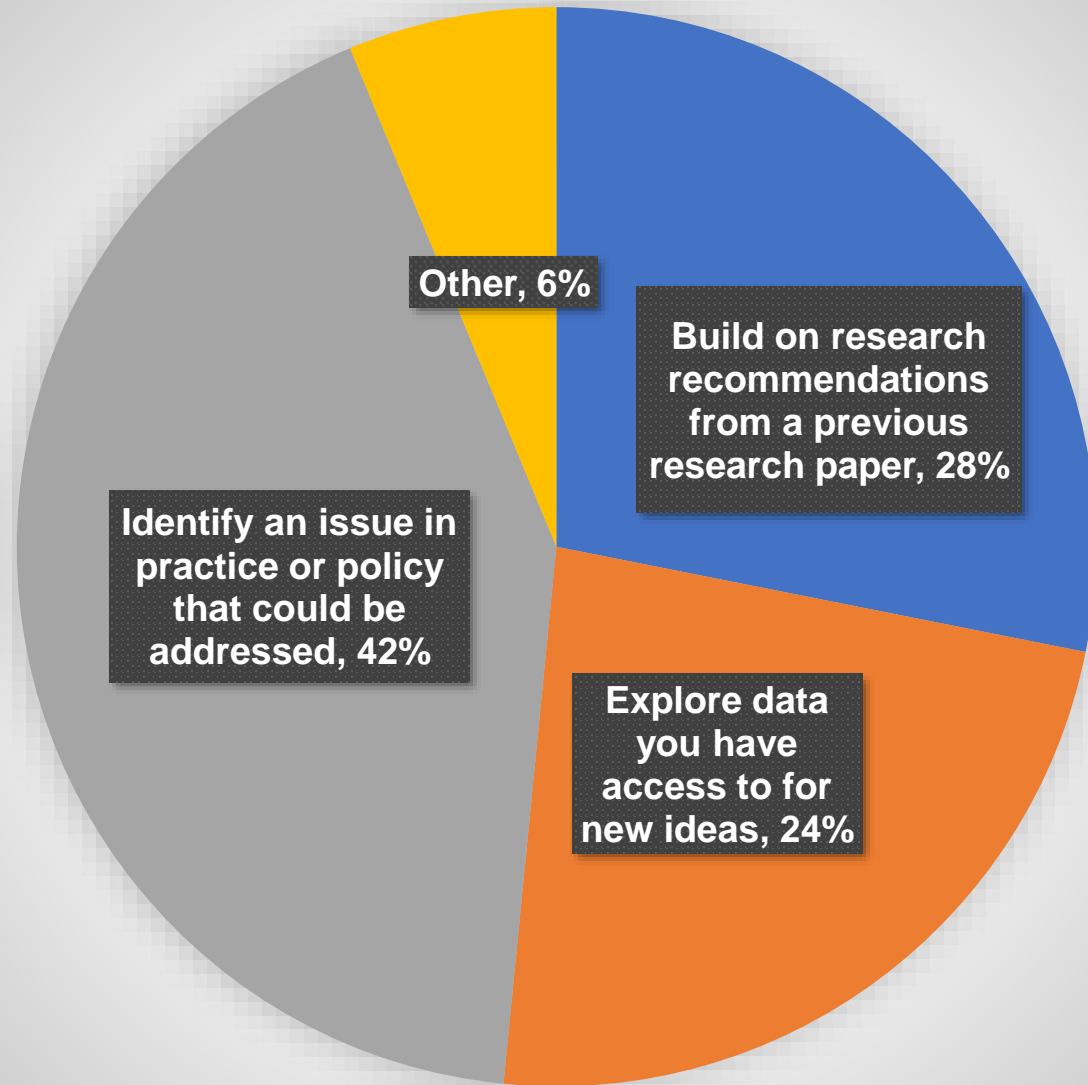
REF?



**“We’re a big company with big ideas,  
and by gosh, I really like your big résumé!”**

# Choosing a Topic

***Which of these do you think is the best starting point when developing a topic for a new paper?***



**Other:**

- “any three of the above, create a perfect storm”
- “Depends on article- Original or Review”
- “PhD topic is a good starting point”
- “Respond to an invite from a journal special issue”



## Some ideas:

- Immerse yourself in journal articles to identify gaps or questions that excite you
- Write/reword research question with a narrower focus
- Be specific, original and realistic about what you're able to achieve
- Talk through emerging ideas with a friend or friendly journal editor





# Who, what, where, when and why?

## **WHY did you choose the topic?**

What interests you about it?

Do you have an opinion about the issues involved?

## **WHO are the key stakeholders on this topic?**

Who is affected by the topic?

Do you know of organizations or institutions affiliated with the topic?

## **WHAT are the major questions for this topic?**

Is there a debate about the topic?

Are there a range of issues and viewpoints to consider?

## **WHERE is your topic important**

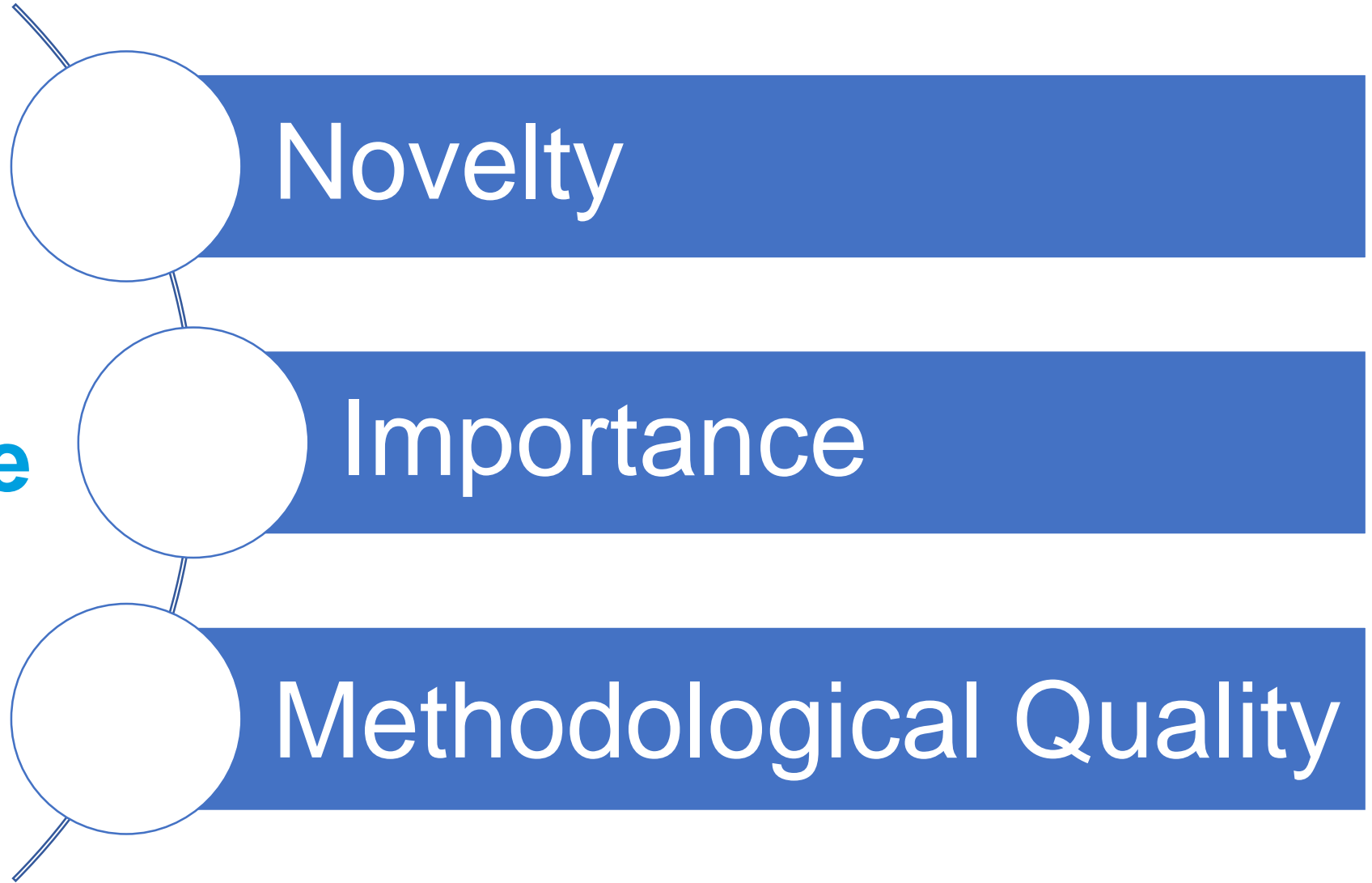
Local, national or international level?

## **WHEN is/was your topic important?**

Is it a current event or an historical issue?

Do you want to compare your topic by time periods?

## Topic Choice



REF criteria: originality, significance and rigour



# Novelty/Originality

**The extent to which the output introduces a new way of thinking about a subject, or is distinctive or transformative compared with previous work in an academic field**

- What is different about your research?
- What have you done that has not been done before?
- Have you used a new technique or modified an existing one?
- Have you studied a cohort of individuals that have never been studied before?



Article  
Text



Article  
info

Research report

## Direct healthcare costs of sedentary behaviour in the UK

 Leonie Heron <sup>1</sup>, Ciaran O'Neill <sup>1</sup>, Helen McAneney <sup>1</sup>, Frank Kee <sup>1</sup>, Mark A Tully <sup>2</sup>

Correspondence to Leonie Heron, Centre for Public Health, Queen's University Belfast Centre for Public Health, Belfast BT12 6BA, UK;

[lheron01@qub.ac.uk](mailto:lheron01@qub.ac.uk)



[< Previous Article](#) [Next Article >](#)

# The Mediating Role of Self-Regulation and Self-Efficacy on Physical Activity Change in Community-Dwelling Older Adults ( $\geq 65$ Years): An Experimental Cross-Lagged Analysis Using Data From SITLESS

in Journal of Aging and Physical Activity

Ilona I. McMullan, Brendan P. Bunting, Nicole E....

[View More +](#)

 Restricted access

[Get Citation Alerts](#)
[Get Permissions](#)

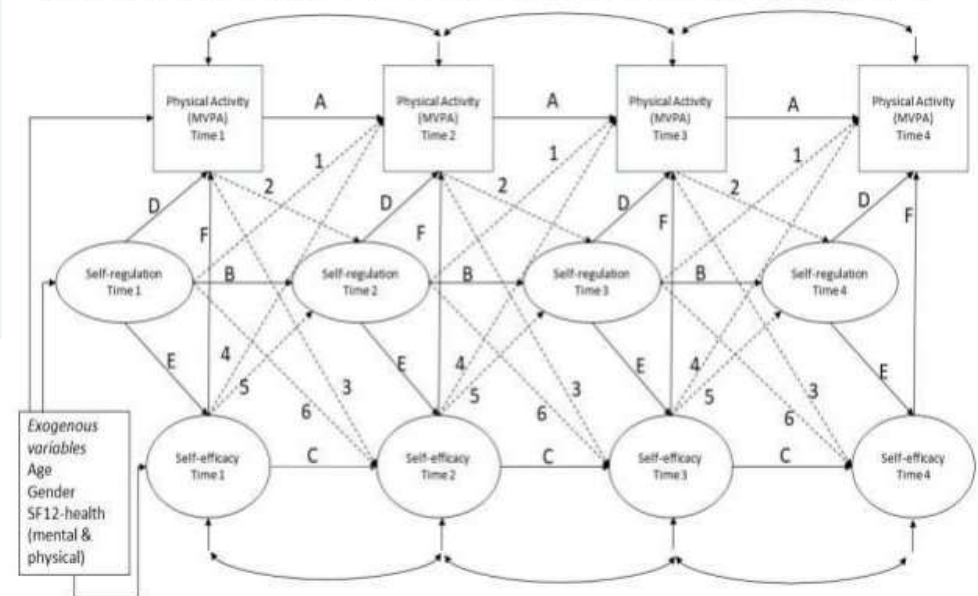
Purchase article

USD \$24.95

 [Subscribe to this Journal](#) [v](#)

## Novelty (methods)


Figure 1 Longitudinal effects between moderate to vigorous physical activity, self-regulation, and self-efficacy



Note: MVPA = Moderate-vigorous Physical Activity; Time 1 = baseline; Time 2 = intervention completion at 4 months; Time 3 = 12-month follow-up; Time 4 = 18-month follow-up; SF-12-health = 12-item Short Form Survey health questionnaire

Original Article | [Published: 05 January 2022](#)

## Sleep problems and subjective cognitive complaints among middle-aged and older adults in 45 low- and middle-income countries

[Lee Smith](#), [Hans Oh](#), [Louis Jacob](#), [Guillermo F. López-Sánchez](#) , [Nicola Veronese](#), [Pinar Soysal](#), [Jae Il Shin](#), [Felipe Schuch](#), [Mark A. Tully](#), [Laurie Butler](#), [Yvonne Barnett](#) & [Ai Koyanagi](#)

[Aging Clinical and Experimental Research](#) (2022) | [Cite this article](#)

52 Accesses | 5 Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

- No studies on this topic exist from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Thus, we investigated the association between sleep problems and SCC in a large sample of middle-age and older adults from 45 LMICs.
- Data on 60,228 adults aged  $\geq 50$  years were analysed

Sci STKE, 2004 Apr 20;2004(230):RE6.

## Carbon monoxide: to boldly go where NO has gone before.

Ryder SW<sup>1</sup>, Morse D, Choi AM

## Human Microbiome Journal

Available online 3 July 2019, 100058

In Press, Accepted Manuscript ?

Original Article

## The effect of having Christmas dinner with in-laws on gut microbiota composition

Nicolien C de Clercq<sup>a</sup>   ... Max Nieuwdorp<sup>d</sup> 

Understanding the Dynamics of Emerging and Re-Emerging Infectious Diseases Using Mathematical Models, 2012: 157-177 ISBN: 978-81-7895-549-0 Editors: Steady Mushayabasa and Claver P. Bhunu

## 7. A mathematical model of Bieber Fever: The most infectious disease of our time?

Valerie Tweedle<sup>1</sup> and Robert J. Smith<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Biology, The University of Ottawa, 585 King Edward Ave, Ottawa ON K1N 6N5 Canada; <sup>2</sup>Department of Mathematics and Faculty of Medicine, The University of Ottawa 585 King Edward Ave, Ottawa ON K1N 6N5, Canada



# Importance/Significance

**The extent to which the work has exerted, or is likely to exert, an influence on an academic field or practical applications.**

- What will people do differently as a result of your work?
- What are its implications for other researchers and for people in the wider world?
- How has our knowledge of the world changed?



SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF  
**MEDICINE & SCIENCE IN SPORTS**

REVIEW ARTICLE

## Consequences of physical inactivity in older adults: A systematic review of reviews and meta-analyses

Conor Cunningham , Roger O' Sullivan, Paolo Caserotti, Mark A. Tully

First published: 04 February 2020 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.13616> | Citations: 103

# Importance (practice)



Trusted evidence.  
Informed decisions.  
Better health.

Title Abstract X

Cochrane Reviews ▾ Trials ▾ Clinical Answers ▾ About ▾ Help ▾

Explore new Cochrane Library features [here](#).

Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews | Review - Intervention

## Physical activity interventions for disease-related physical and mental health during and following treatment in people with non-advanced colorectal cancer


✉ Maresa McGettigan, Chris R Cardwell, Marie M Cantwell, Mark A Tully Authors' declarations of interest

Version published: 03 May 2020 Version history




<https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD012864.pub2>

ANNALS OF MEDICINE  
2021, VOL. 53, NO. 1, 1935-1944  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07853890.2021.1992496>



 Open access

## What are the recommendations for returning athletes who have experienced long term COVID-19 symptoms?

Rosie K. Lindsay<sup>a</sup>, Jason J. Wilson <sup>b</sup>, Mike Trott<sup>c</sup>, Olawale Olanrewaju<sup>d</sup>, Mark A. Tully <sup>e</sup>, Guillermo F. López-Sánchez<sup>c</sup>, Jae Il Shin<sup>f</sup>, Damiano Pizzol<sup>g</sup>, Peter Allen<sup>a</sup>, Laurie T. Butler<sup>h</sup>, Yvonne Barnett<sup>i</sup>, and Lee Smith <sup>i</sup>

PLOS ONE

PUBLISH

ABOUT

BROWSE

 OPEN ACCESS  PEER-REVIEWED

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## The effect of different COVID-19 public health restrictions on mobility: A systematic review

Mark A. Tully , Laura McMaw, Deepti Adlakha, Neale Blair, Jonny McAneney, Helen McAneney, Christina Carmichael, Conor Cunningham, Nicola C. Armstrong, Lee Smith

Published: December 8, 2021 • <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0260919>

# Methodological Quality/Rigour

**The extent to which the purpose of the work is clearly articulated, an appropriate methodology for the research area has been adopted, and compelling evidence presented to show that the purpose has been achieved.**

- Have you chosen a sensible research question?
- Have you used the best methodology to answer that question?
- Have you applied standardised techniques robustly or properly validated innovative techniques?
- Have you presented your results as clearly and convincingly as possible?



## Research Methods & Reporting

### A new framework for developing and evaluating complex interventions: update of Medical Research Council guidance

BMJ 2021 ; 374 :doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2061> (Published 30 September 2021)

Cite this as: BMJ 2021;374:n2061

Article	Related content	Metrics	Responses	Peer review
---------	-----------------	---------	-----------	-------------

Kathryn Skivington<sup>1</sup>, research fellow<sup>1</sup>, Lyssey Matthews<sup>1</sup>, research fellow<sup>1</sup>, Sharon Anne Simpson<sup>1</sup>, professor of behavioural sciences and health<sup>1</sup>, Peter Craig<sup>1</sup>, professor of public health evaluation<sup>1</sup>, Jens Baird<sup>1</sup>, professor of public health and epidemiology<sup>2</sup>, Jane M Blazeby<sup>3</sup>, professor of surgery<sup>4</sup>, Kathleen Anne Boyd, reader in health economics<sup>5</sup>, Neil Craig, acting head of evaluation within Public Health Scotland<sup>6</sup>, David P French, professor of health psychology<sup>6</sup>, Emma McIntosh, professor of health economics<sup>6</sup>, Mark Petticrew, professor of public health evaluation<sup>7</sup>, Jo Rychtch-Malone, faculty dean<sup>8</sup>, Martin White, professor of population health research<sup>8</sup>, Laurence Moore, unit director<sup>1</sup>

## Research Methods & Reporting

### Process evaluation of complex interventions: Medical Research Council guidance

BMJ 2015 ; 350 :doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.h1258> (Published 19 March 2015)

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h1258

Article	Related content	Metrics	Responses	Peer review
---------	-----------------	---------	-----------	-------------

Graham F Moore, research fellow<sup>1</sup>, Suzanne Audrey, research fellow<sup>2</sup>, Mary Barker, associate professor of psychology<sup>3</sup>, Lyndal Bond, principal research officer<sup>4</sup>, Chris Bonell, professor of sociology and social policy<sup>5</sup>, Wendy Hardeman, senior research associate in behavioural science<sup>6</sup>, Laurence Moore, director<sup>1</sup>, Alicia O'Connell, professor of health services research<sup>6</sup>, Tannazeh Tinati, research fellow<sup>3</sup>, David Wright, children, young people, families and health programme leader<sup>1</sup>, Jenis Beid, associate professor of public health<sup>3</sup>



## Peer-led walking programme to increase physical activity in inactive 60- to 70-year-olds: Walk with Me pilot RCT

Public Health Research, No. 7.10

Mark A Tully, Conor Cunningham, Ashlene Wright, Ilona McMullan, Julie Doherty, Debbie Collins, Catrine Tudor-Locke, Joanne Morgan, Glenn Phair, Bob Laventure, Ellen EA Simpson, Suzanne M McDonough, Evie Gardner, Frank Kee, Marie H Murphy, Ashley Agus, Ruth F Hunter, Wendy Hardeman, and Margaret E Cupples.

► Author Information

Southampton (UK): [NIHR Journals Library](https://www.nihr-journals.org/); 2019 May.



FIGURE 1 Integrated model to design intervention content.

## Annals of Behavioral Medicine

Issues Advance Articles Submit Purchase Alerts About



Volume 46, Issue 1  
August 2013

### The Behavior Change Technique Taxonomy (v1) of 93 Hierarchically Clustered Techniques: Building an International Consensus for the Reporting of Behavior Change Interventions

Susan Michie, DPhil, CPsychol, Michelle Richardson, PhD, Marie Johnston, PhD, CPsychol, Charles Abraham, DPhil, CPsychol, Jill Francis, PhD, CPsychol, Wendy Hardeman, PhD, Martin R Eccles, MD, James Carr, PhD, Caroline E Wood, PhD Author Notes

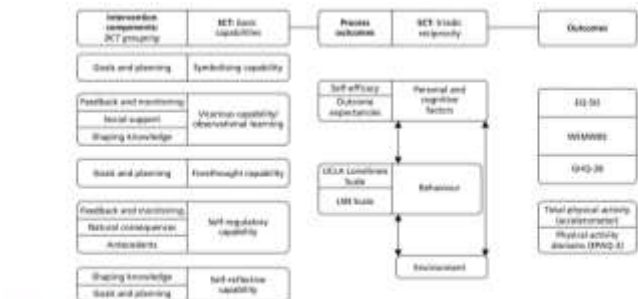


FIGURE 2 Walk with Me logic model. EQ-5D, EuroQol-5 Dimensions; IPAQ-JR, General Health Questionnaire-28 items; WEMWBS, Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being scale.

# Quality

Tully et al. *Pilot and Feasibility Studies* (2019) 4:117  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13061-019-0108-3>

Pilot and Feasibility Studies

## STUDY PROTOCOL

Open Access



### Walk with Me: a protocol for a pilot RCT of a peer-led walking programme to increase physical activity in inactive older adults

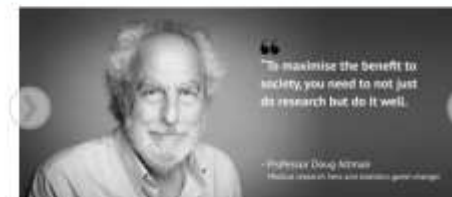
Mark A. Tully<sup>1,2</sup>, Conor Cunningham<sup>1</sup>, Margaret E. Cupples<sup>1,2</sup>, Duane Farrell<sup>3</sup>, Wendy Hardeman<sup>4</sup>, Ruth F. Hunter<sup>1,2</sup>, Bob Laventure<sup>5</sup>, Suzanne M. McDonough<sup>3,6,7</sup>, Joanne Morgan<sup>1,2</sup>, Marie H. Murphy<sup>8</sup>, Ellen E. A. Simpson<sup>10</sup>, Catrine Tudor-Locke<sup>11</sup>, Ashlene Wright<sup>1,2</sup> and Frank Kee<sup>1,2</sup>



## GUIDANCE FOR CLINICAL TRIAL PROTOCOLS

SPIRIT (Standard Protocol Items: Recommendations for Intervention Trials)

Key Documents



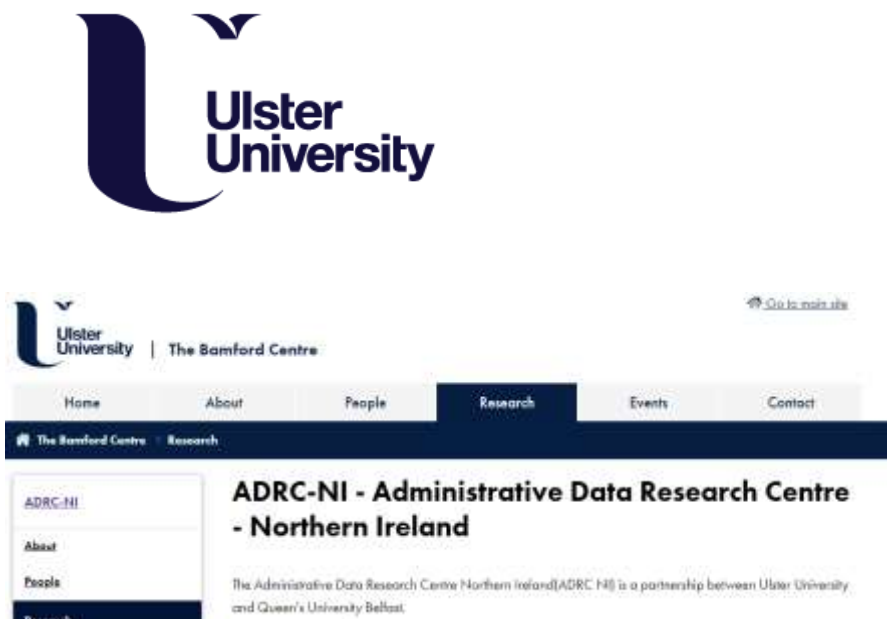
## Welcome to the CONSORT Website

CONSORT assists the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials and encourages new trials to be developed by the CONSORT Group to address the problems arising from inadequate reporting of randomised controlled trials.

# Finding Data



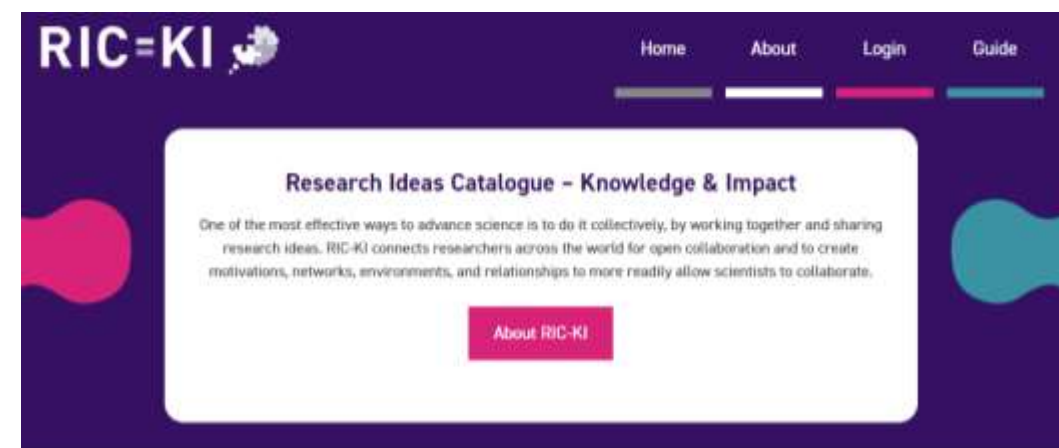




<https://www.ukbiobank.ac.uk/>



<https://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>



<https://ric-ki.lboro.ac.uk/>

# Developing a Writing Habit



# Finding the right place to start

What's known?

What should I do?

What's new?



# Developing the Habit



"If you don't have time to read, you don't have time (or the tools) to write"  
**Stephen King**

## Train your Brain

- Develop a reading hobby
- Sign up for Table of Content alerts
- Selectively read articles





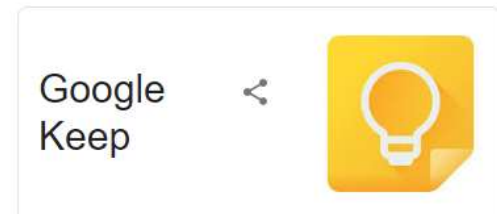
# Developing the Habit

“Suggestions of problems  
for research are gold”  
**Sir David Cox**

## Get the ‘right’ gear

Keep notes...

- seminars/papers/conversations etc.
- notebook by bed/desk
- phone app
- scrap paper etc.





## Develop Routine

- Habits developed by repeating the behaviour
- Set a reminder (diary appointment)
- Develop pattern – e.g. no meeting Monday
- Develop accountability
  - e.g. 100 words in 100 days
- Reward progress



# Developing the Habit



## Share Ideas



### BMC Research Notes

[Home](#) · [About](#) · [Articles](#) · [Submission Guidelines](#) · [Join The Editorial Board](#)

Research note | [Open Access](#) | Published: 11 January 2019

### Association of objective sedentary behaviour and self-rated health in English older adults

[Jason J. Wilson](#) , [Nicole E. Blackburn](#), [Rachel O'Reilly](#), [Frank Kee](#), [Paolo Caserotti](#) & [Mark A. Tully](#)

## Space to Think



**Your suggestions...**

# Your Top Tips

## Preparation

Plan your paper

Planning, do detailed plan of paper before you start to write anything

Read lots around the area before starting!

Read other papers

Read, read and read a lot other relevant paper

Read lots of papers so you can identify good practice and implement those characteristics e.g. structure, style etc.

## Action

Set the structure

Start with data presentation

Start, stop thinking about all the challenges that stop you from writing, just start

To focus on the research questions and outline the manuscript

Write in sections; select journal; consider key message and not seek to include everything - be specific



## **Others comments**

Stay motivated

Time management is key

Unsure

Practice makes better and each draft will get better and better until the final version is reached

Write the aim of the paper down and keep it next to you

# In Summary...

- Identify your motivation
- Spend time refining your research question
- Identify best source for data
- Develop a writing habit



# Getting ready to write a paper

## Over to You

**Professor Mark Tully**

Professor of Public Health

School of Medicine

Ulster University, Northern Ireland



[m.tully@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.tully@ulster.ac.uk)



[@MarkATully](https://twitter.com/MarkATully)

