

# Escaping the Ivory Tower: How to Grow Your Public Impact

**Barbara Oakley, PhD, PE**

Ramón y Cajal Distinguished Scholar of Global  
Digital Learning, McMaster University  
Professor of Engineering,  
Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan

# What we'll cover

- Popular Books: How to break into publishing
- MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)
- Public speaking
- Media outreach
- Pluses and minuses of using social media



Barb Oakley,  
Professor of Engineering  
Oakland University  
Rochester, Michigan



Terrence Sejnowski  
Francis Crick Professor  
The Salk Institute  
Professor of Biological Sciences  
University of California, San Diego





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## Workshop with Barbara Oakley

**Date:** Thursday, May 7, 2015, 10:00am to 11:00am

**LESSONS FROM A BASEMENT STUDIO—**

**HOW TO MAKE A RIVETING ONLINE CLASS**

This talk describes the key elements behind the making of high quality educational videos for online learning, including scripting, filming, and editing.

# Note

There are many ways to grow your impact.





# Chasing the rabbit



Post-tenure is a time  
for risk

(Image by Rainer Hungershausen)

WALL STREET JOURNAL BESTSELLER

# DEEP

RULES FOR FOCUSED SUCCESS  
IN A DISTRACTED WORLD

# WORK

CAL NEWPORT  
AUTHOR OF *SO GOOD THEY CAN'T IGNORE YOU*

~~*I don't have time*~~



~~It's impossible to reach the pinnacle of my profession by being "popular"~~

- Fellow, Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers
- Fellow, American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering
- Chester F. Carlson Award for Technical Innovation in Teaching, American Society of Engineering Education.

# *Popular Books*

# The bad

- Typical non-fiction book sells 2,000 copies over its lifetime
- 8% royalty

# The good

- Open professional doors
- Open doors for speaking and MOOC-making—revenue generators
- Build great new perspectives on your subject





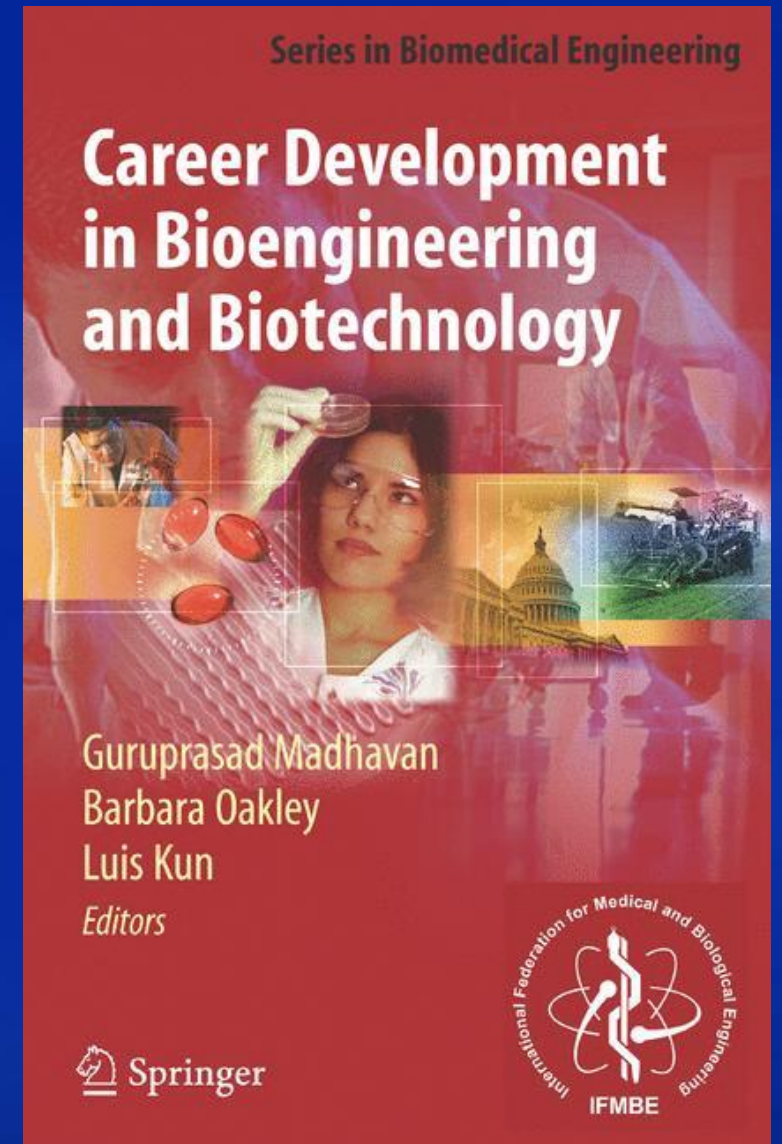
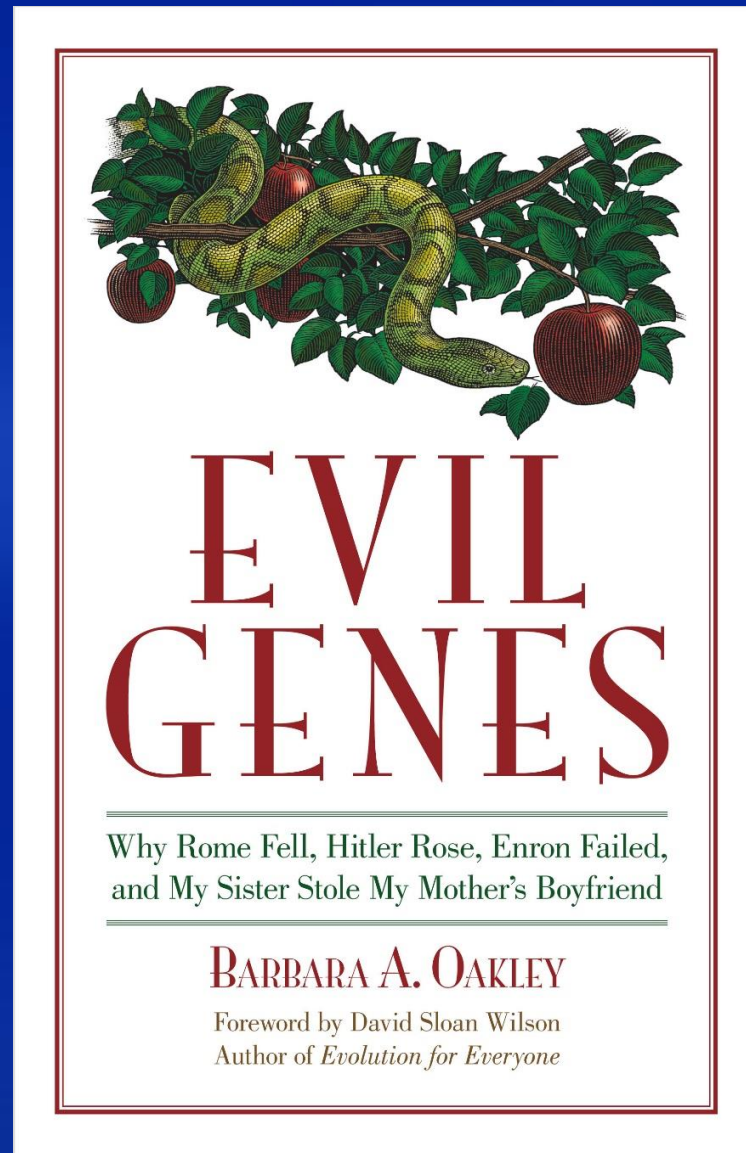
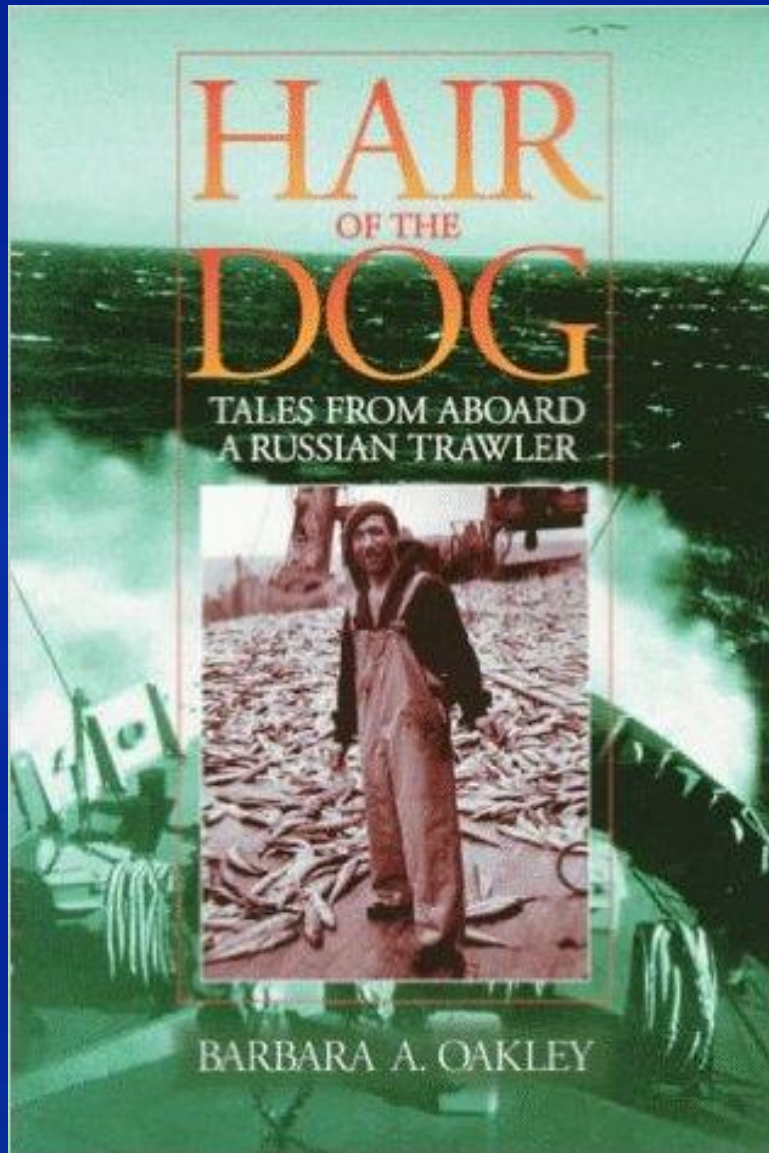
# “Caged” versus “Free Range” learners



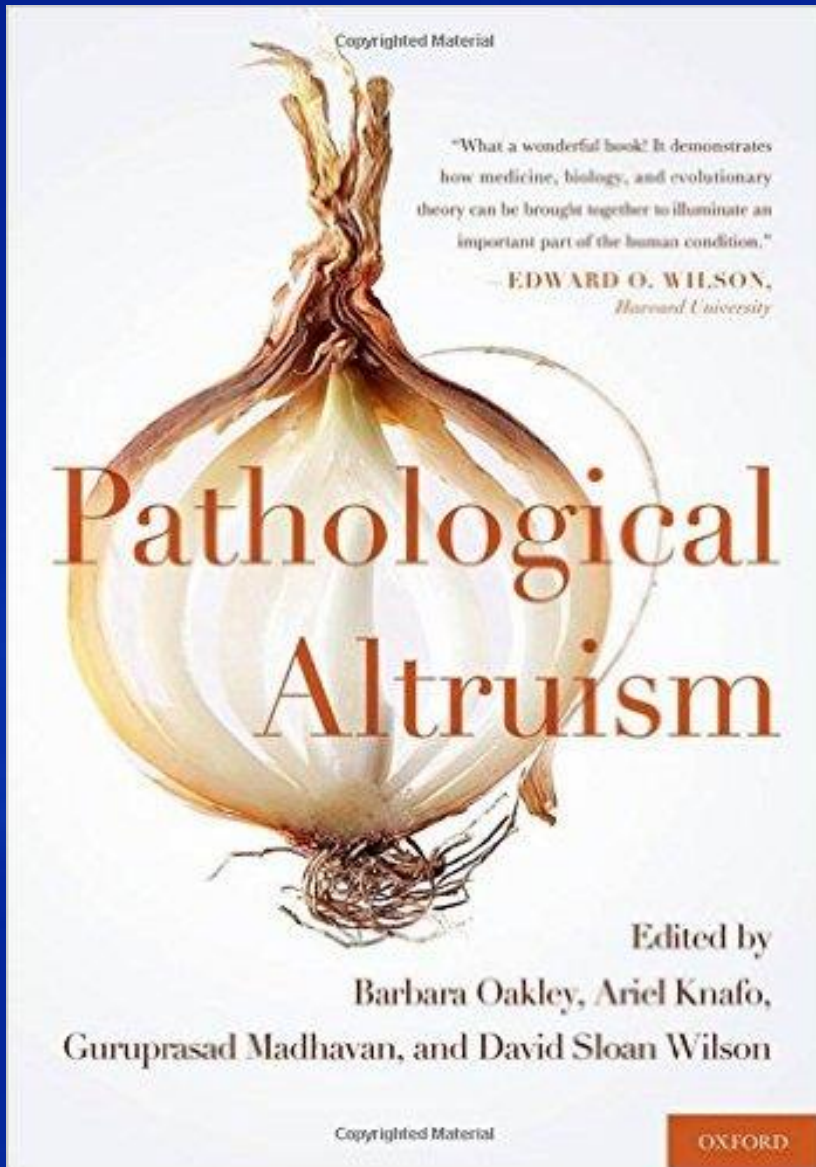
18 to 24-  
year-olds

18 to 85-year-olds

# How I got started writing books







# The New York Times

## *The Pathological Altruist Gives Till Someone Hurts*

Basics

By NATALIE ANGIER OCT. 3, 2011

“a scholarly yet surprising study”

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

BEST OF THE WEB

## Pathological Altruism

A simple concept that could revolutionize scientific and social thought.

By *James Taranto*

June 14, 2013

[Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America](#)

Concepts and implications of altruism bias and pathological altruism

Barbara A. Oakley<sup>1</sup>

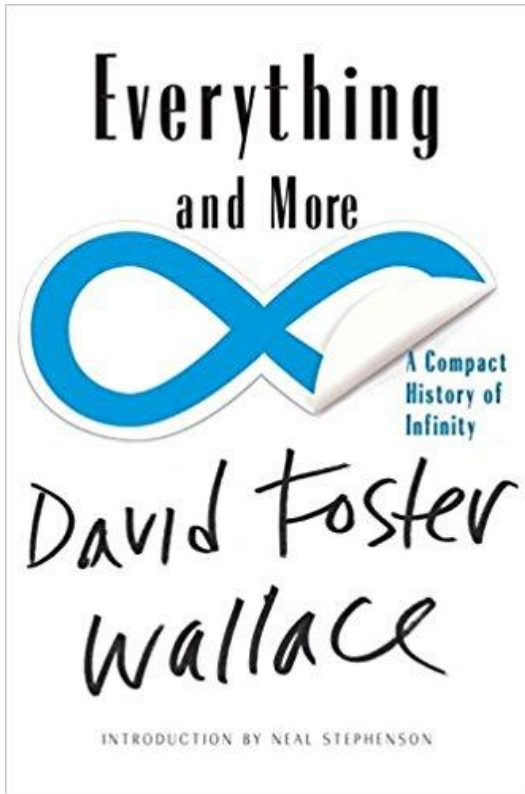


THOMAS S. KUHN

THE  
STRUCTURE OF  
SCIENTIFIC  
REVOLUTIONS

A BRILLIANT, ORIGINAL ANALYSIS OF THE  
NATURE, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES  
OF REVOLUTIONS IN BASIC SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS

P1P 5130 (16 64 vol)



# Slings and arrows



## “Super Distinguished University”

- “Blah De Blah” Distinguished Professor History of Science
- Professor in the Departments of Philosophy, History, Psychology

Director of the “Blah de Blah” Center for History of Science

"A good teacher will leave you educated. But a great teacher will leave you curious. Well, Barbara Oakley is a great teacher. Not only does she have a mind for numbers, she has a way with words, and she makes every one of them count."

—Mike Rowe, creator and host of Discovery Channel's *Dirty Jobs* and CEO of makeitwork

# a $\left(\frac{\text{MIND}}{\text{for}}\right) =$ NUMBERS



HOW TO EXCEL AT  
MATH AND SCIENCE  
(Even If You Flunked Algebra)

BARBARA OAKLEY, Ph.D.

# Mindshift

Break Through Obstacles  
to Learning and Discover  
Your Hidden Potential

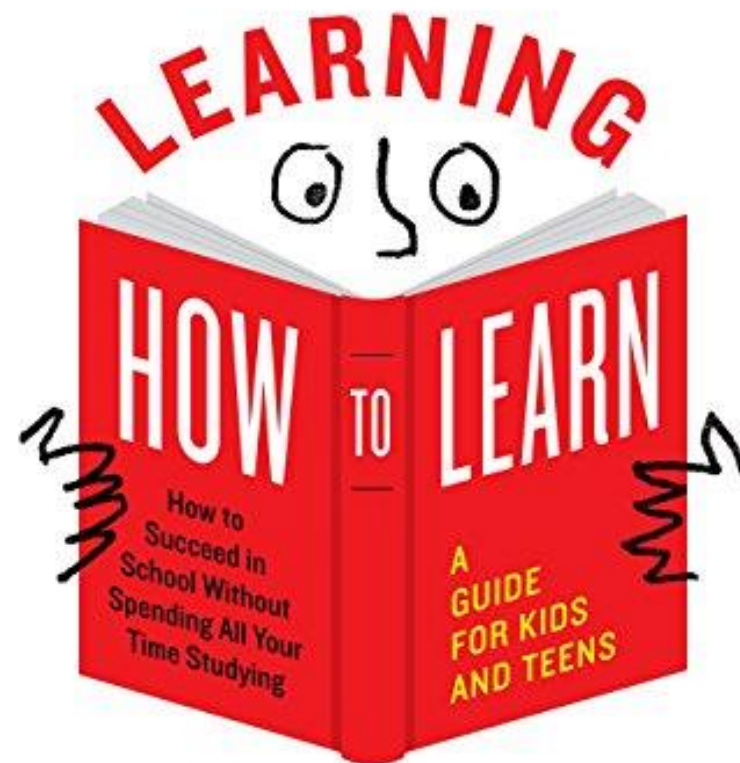


Barbara Oakley, PhD

Bestselling Author of *A Mind for Numbers*

And Creator of the Popular Massive Open Online Course "Learning How to Learn"

From the bestselling author of *A Mind for Numbers* and  
the creators of the popular online course Learning How to Learn



BARBARA OAKLEY, PhD, AND  
TERRENCE SEJNOWSKI, PhD,  
WITH ALISTAIR McCONVILLE

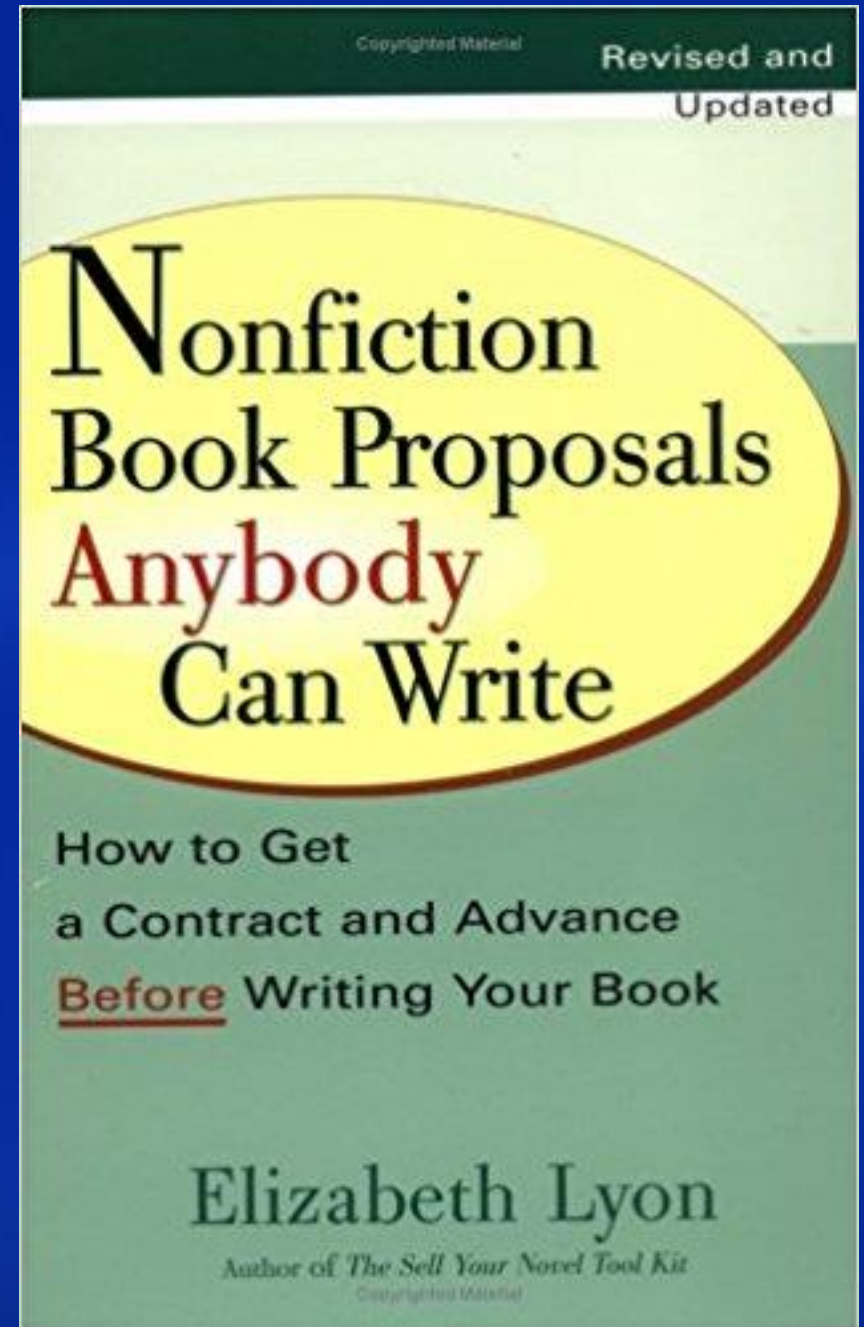


# The moral of the story

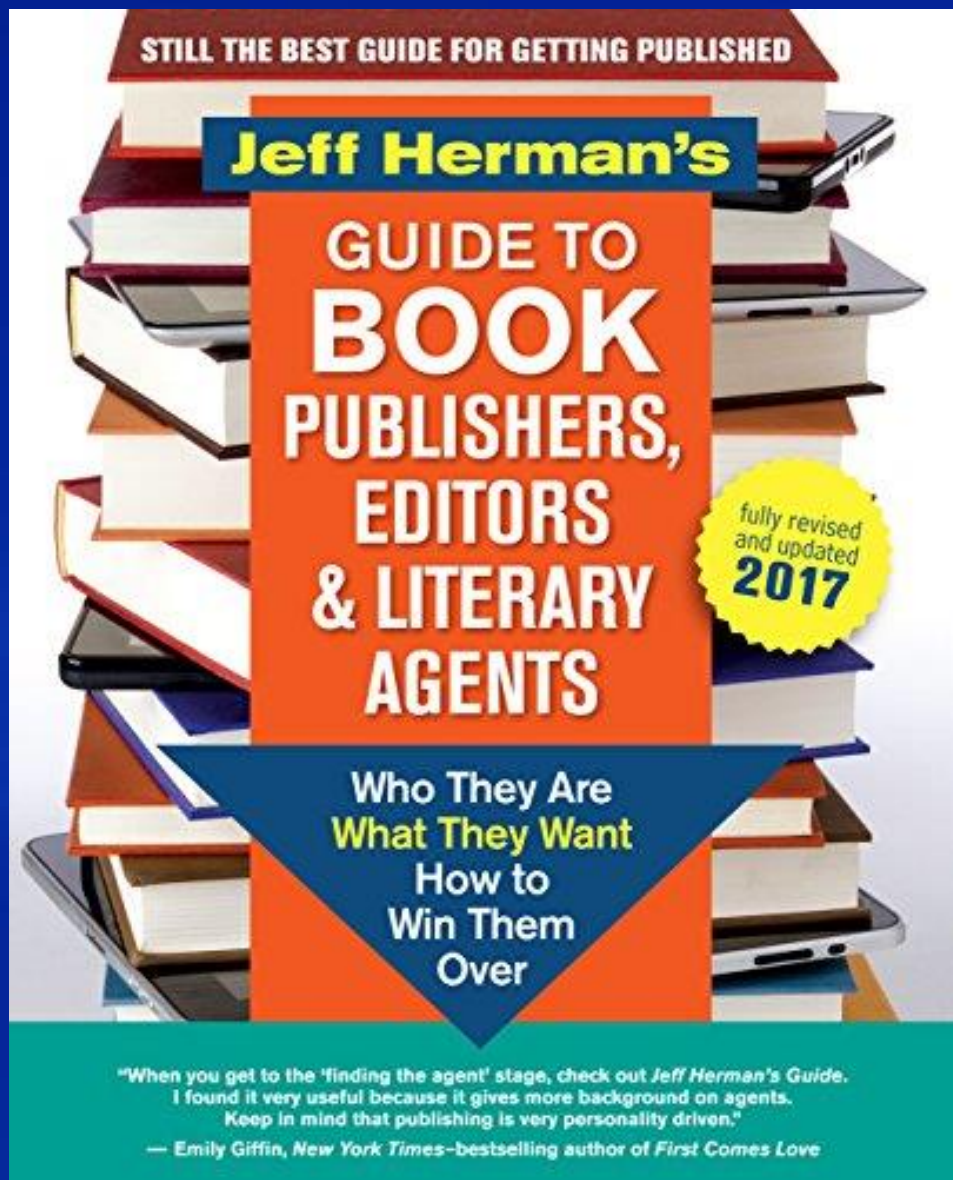
- Writing books opens doors.
- Don't be afraid to think beyond your specialty—use your specialty to inform your writing.
- Outreach to the public provides great venues for interdisciplinarity.

# The importance of platform

# How to write a book proposal







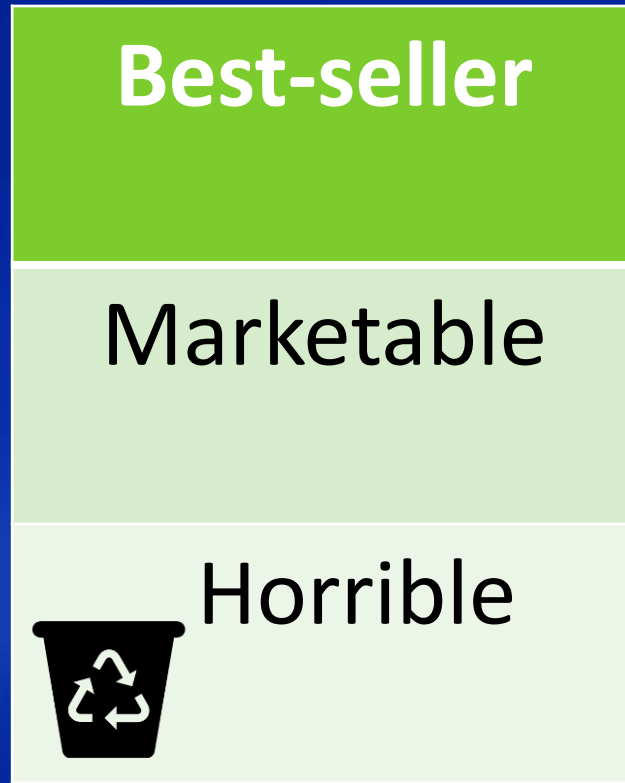
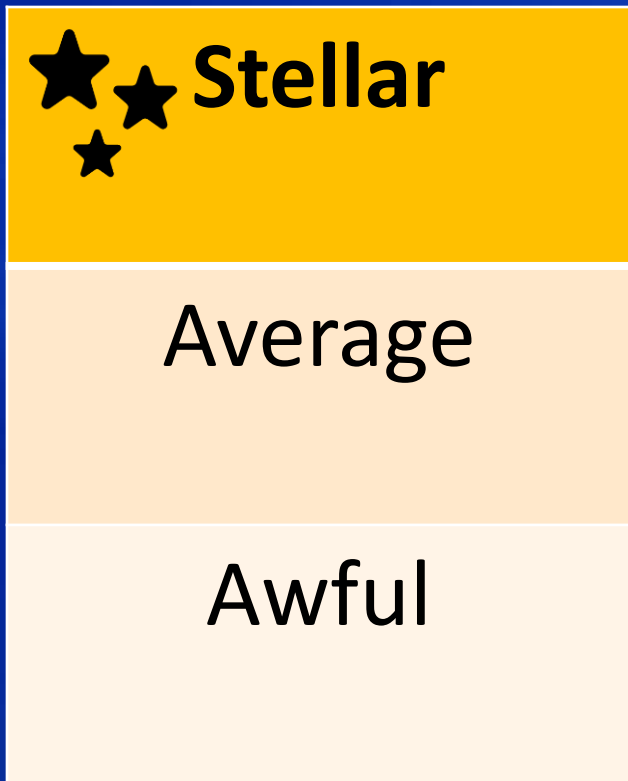
# Getting a literary agent

My agent, Rita Rosenkranz, specializes in non-fiction

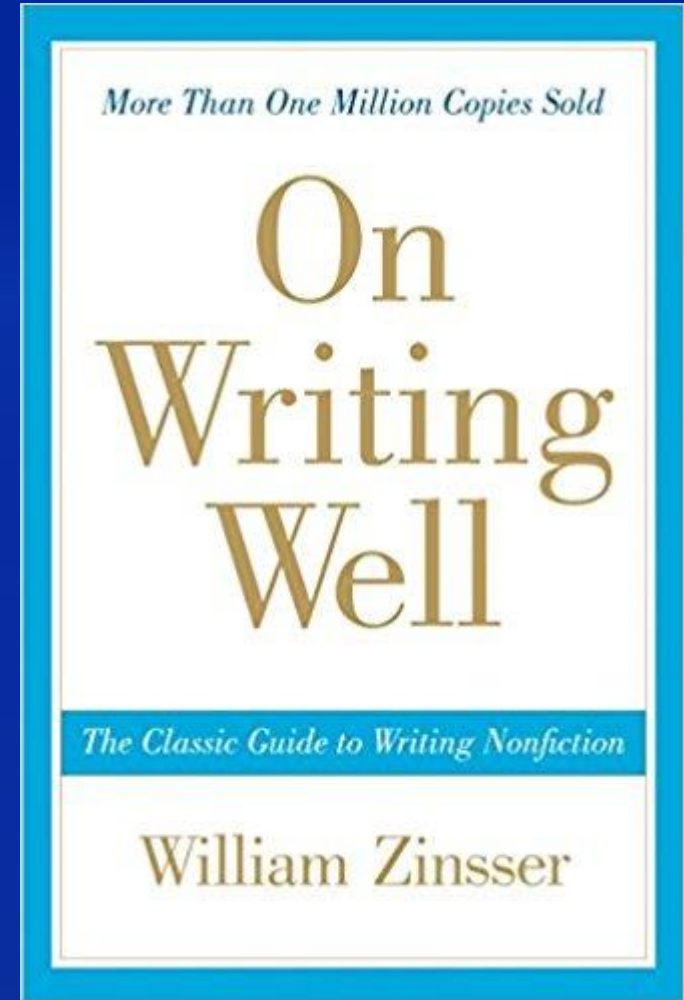
Attend a writing conference

<https://www.creativenonfiction.org>

# Academic writing



# Popular writing



Literary agents who specialize in  
marrying academicians with  
professional writers

David Moldawer

[Bookitect.com](http://Bookitect.com)

[david@bookitect.com](mailto:david@bookitect.com)

# Editors

- I generally hire my own editor
- Ask friends & colleagues
- Check the forewords/acknowledgments of books
- Editorial Freelancers Association:  
<https://www.the-efa.org/>



Books led to....

*The Online World*

$a \left( \frac{\text{MIND}}{\text{for}} \right) =$   
**NUMBERS**



**HOW TO EXCEL AT  
MATH AND SCIENCE**

*(Even If You Flunked Algebra)*

BARBARA OAKLEY, Ph.D.



Barb Oakley with *Science Friday's*  
Ira Flatow (1.3 million weekly listeners)  
and the *New York Times'* Ben Carey

# Massive Open Online Course—MOOC

- Like your own educational television show
- Endless reruns
- Only investment—startup time—  
equipment



# The challenge of self-marginalization

- “Second Tier” Universities
  - Top teachers
- Top Universities
  - Georgia Tech



# Outreach potential

- *Learning How to Learn* has had over 2 million students enrolled from over 200 countries.

Cheery Friday greetings to our *Learning How to Learners!*

## Book of the Week

Our emphasis this week is on photographs, so along those lines, we recommend [\*Understanding Exposure: How to Shoot Great Photographs with Any Camera\*](#). Veteran photographer Bryan Peterson “explains the fundamentals of light, aperture, and shutter speed and how they interact with and influence one another.” This book has an extraordinary 5 star rating on Amazon, with 151 reviews.

## MOOC of the Week

We’re at the Coursera Annual Conference here in Boulder, Colorado now, and it’s really quite spectacular seeing all the latest trends in worldwide learning! We were fortunate to attend a presentation about the MOOC [\*Seeing Through Photographs\*](#), taught by Sarah Meister from the Museum of Modern Art. This is an extraordinarily popular course that will help you to look critically at photographs.



**Silicon Valley meetup—  
45 people**









INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION  
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM





# Opportunities for research & a little shameless

plugging



**Online Learning**  
OLJ • THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF OLC

## Creating a Sticky MOOC

*Barbara Ann Oakley, Debra Poole, MaryAnne Nestor*

v. 20, n. 1, Jan. 2016. ISSN 2472-5730. Available at:

<https://olj.onlinelearningconsortium.org/index.php/olj/article/view/731>

### [PDF] Turning student groups into effective teams

[B Oakley](#), [RM Felder](#), [R Brent](#)... - Journal of **student** ..., 2004 - [owwww.brookes.ac.uk](http://owwww.brookes.ac.uk)

This paper is a guide to the **effective** design and management of team assignments in a college classroom where little class time is available for instruction on teaming skills. Topics discussed include forming teams, helping them become **effective**, and using peer ratings to

Cited by 636 Related articles All 33 versions Import into EndNote ⇨



# How can *you* do a MOOC?

- Encourage your university to become involved in the world of MOOCs
- Partner with a colleague at a top-tier institution
- Remember, you're competing with YouTube & TV, not just other universities. Take charge of creating compelling content—it's not rocket science!

# *Public Speaking*



- TED talk
  - Chris Anderson's *TED Talks*
  - Nancy Duarte's *Persuasive Presentations*
- Keynotes
- High impact public venues
- *Avoid speaking agencies*



# Travel

- Kyoto
- Madrid
- Beijing
- Bogotá
- Dublin
- Singapore
- Cape Town
- London
- Jakarta
- Belfast



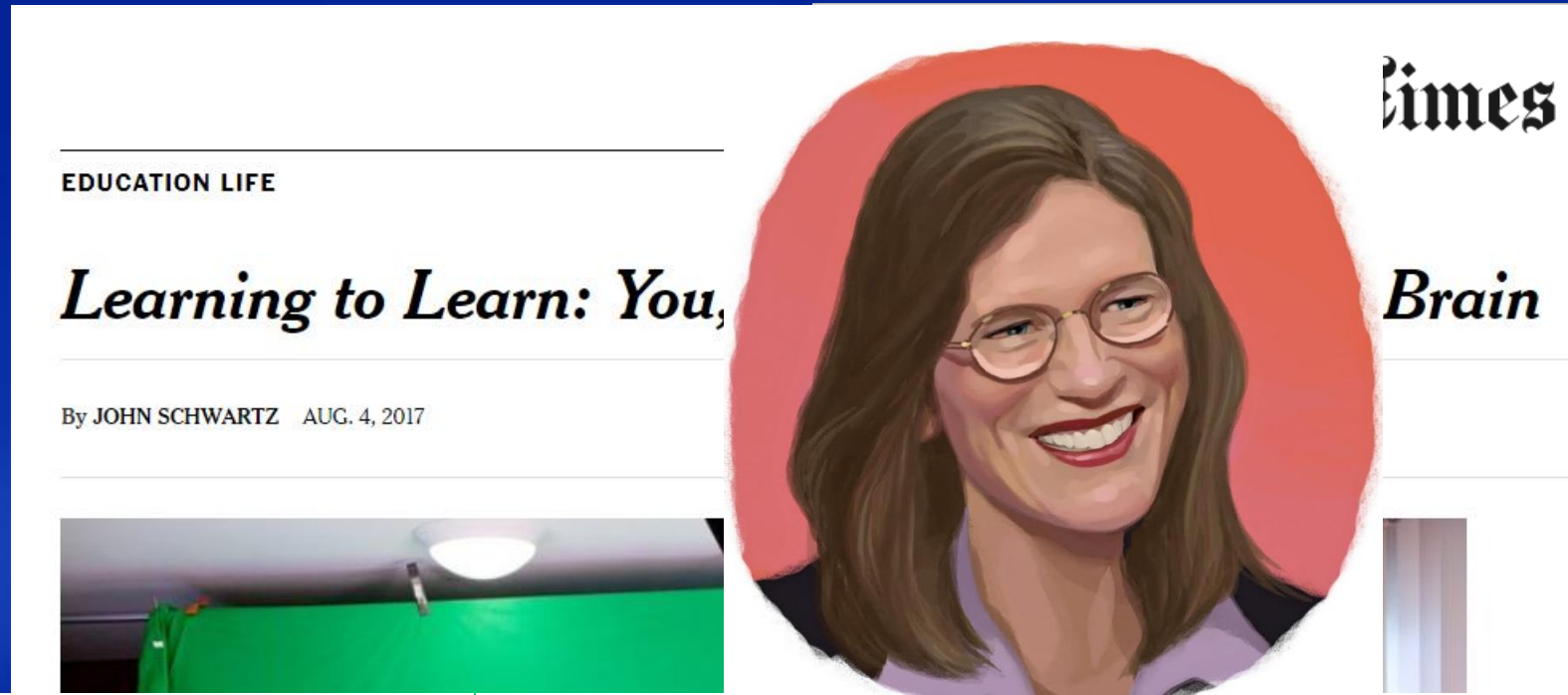
- I'm a very ordinary person.
- This is within your reach, also!

# *Media Outreach*



# Newspapers

- *New York Times*
- *Wall Street Journal*
- *Washington Post*





times

Brain

EDUCATION LIFE

*Learning to Learn: You,*

By JOHN SCHWARTZ AUG. 4, 2017



## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

OPINION | THE WEEKEND INTERVIEW

### How a Polymath Mastered Math—and So Can You

'Mindshift' author Barbara Oakley on the science and practice of learning—and finding love at the South Pole.

By *James Taranto*

Updated May 12, 2017 7:18 p.m. ET

201 COMMENTS



# Op Eds

Over the transom

“Back door”  
assistance

The equivalent  
of a moon shot

Opinion | OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR **The New York Times**

## The Killer in the Lecture Hall

By BARBARA OAKLEY APRIL 19, 2007

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.


COMMENTARY

### How We Should Be Teaching Math

Achieving ‘conceptual’ understanding doesn’t mean true mastery. For that, you need practice.

*By Barbara Oakley*

Sept. 22, 2014 6:47 p.m. ET

 74 COMMENTS

# The value of publisher publicists

- Radio
- Television
- Blogs
- Other venues (eg LinkedIn, BigThink, Inc, etc.)

Use books to leverage online, and vice versa


# The Challenge of Social Media

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Emails

*In Conclusion*



# Career synergies

- Popular books
  - MOOCs
  - Public speaking
  - Media outreach
- 
- Academic volumes
  - Research papers
  - Funding

Work to mitigate your career risk

- Reach out!
- Take risks!
- We're at the ground floor of an impact revolution!

*What are you waiting for?*