The host of a la

te night public radio talk show interviewed a seasoned poet concerning the job of writing. "The hardest part about writing," he said, "is putting the seat of your pants in the seat of your chair." Writing is a job that all of us must do well, but until recently, the seat of my pants rarely found the seat of my chair until waning hours before a proposal deadline. The dogs were well walked, the house unusually tidy, and my VW had an especially high shine but little of the work of writing well had been done. Friedland and Folt's *Writing Successful Science Proposals* gets the inexperienced writer writing in due time by giving practical advice on how to develop a grant proposal. Brief comments, exercise, and examples to motivate the writer into the first steps of writing well and make sitting down to write more of a challenge than a chore.

This book is written as a primer and its layout follows the authors' model for writing a proposal. That is, the primer is composed of a series of short exercises in the same way a large proposal is built up from a number of smaller, doable tasks. Each chapter of the book is divided into subtitled subsections, none of which is more than three pages, each with pointed advice, and most with recommended exercises that can be completed in a few hours. Chapter 1, "Getting started," for instance, includes three tasks I should complete even before I sit down to write: critique other proposals, accomplish administrative tasks, and develop a conceptual framework. (These jobs are, in fact, much easier than walking my miscreant dogs of waxing my VW.) Once I have warmed up the seat of the chair, they argue, I should begin with the most straightforward assignment: write a significance statement. (If you can't do this, they say, "stop writing and keep thinking." Good advice!) The rest of the proposal development follows a standard chronology (objectives, introduction, experimental design, and methods). Each section of the test provides specific guidelines on the structure and content of each section of the proposal. Within each section of the text the authors make specific recommendations regarding content and layout, and chose examples that clearly demonstrate each principle. The remainder of the book reviews briefly the appropriate use of citations, budget development, tracking a proposal following submission, resubmitting a proposal, and ethics and accountability in research. (This business end of writing proposals is critical to the writer's success, but is overlooked in other writing guides.) This work is thoroughly indexed, the few cartoons are meaningful without being too cute, and the price is remarkably low for what has already proven to me a useful handbook.

Writing Successful Science Proposals is intended as a primer and not as an exhaustive reference. The authors make clear in 162 pages of text that little of the job of writing is divinely inspired, that the only way to make progress in writing is to begin, and that getting started in writing is a very easy task, indeed. While the outline of the text may seem to be standard fare for any writing manual, the good humor, concrete advice and brevity make this one especially useful. Graeme Berlyn, Yale University, comments in the cover notes that "Friedland and Folt are the Strunk and White of proposal writing." I concur. The authors provide such worldly advice that the book could easily be subtitled "Recommendations for proposal writing from the School

of Hard Knocks." In a very small space, the monumental task of writing a grant proposal is reduced to a series of smaller jobs that can be completed in an orderly and timely manner. This, along with the recommended exercises for developing writing skills, make this an exceptional handbook for first time authors, or as a text for a graduate level course in proposal generation.

My copy of *Writing Successful Science Proposals* is already worn. The authors recommended reading the book in its entirety before beginning to write. I did. Twice. During the first reading, I referred to it to make comments on a draft of a colleague's proposal. During the second reading, I began jotting down notes for my next proposal. Putting the seat of my pants in the seat of my chair has been a bit easier (much to the chagrin of my pets) since my introduction to Friedland and Folt. This exceptionally useful and affordable handbook will serve as a refresher to seasoned writers and as a guide and source of encouragement for first-time authors. It will likely find its way to a large host of bookshelves, but has already been borrowed from mine.

Sagers, C.L. 2000. Suiting up to sit down: a step by step guide to preparing a research proposal. Ecology 81:3550.

C.L. Sagers is with the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas.