



APA DIVISION 15 PRESENTS

▶ **ONE TIP**

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**“SO YOU’RE THINKING OF EDITING A HANDBOOK? IT IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY IF YOU HAVE AN INSPIRING VISION AND THE TIME IS RIGHT”**

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As the body of educational psychology research grows and new concepts and findings emerge, there is enormous value in bringing together the main ideas, the main findings, and the main scholars to showcase the state-of-the-art in the field. Edited handbooks have become a very important means of doing this. At some point in their career, many scholars will consider editing (or co-editing) a handbook. In deciding whether to—or not to—edit a handbook, it is helpful to reflect on some of the realities in the process. I have been a lead editor on one handbook and a co-editor on another. Here a few things I have learned along the way.

*Have a Clear Vision and Purpose for the Handbook:* It is essential to identify a major and significant theme for the handbook. As I describe below, a clear vision will be critical at major points of the handbook’s development. There are typically two reasons that would warrant a

handbook: (1) the theme is significant, has not been addressed in a handbook before, and there is a critical mass of expertise and research that can contribute to it; (2) the theme is significant, it has been some time since a previous handbook on the theme was published, and a critical mass of new or refined expertise and research has accrued.

*Understand the Opportunity Cost:* Consider what will not get done in your life if you edit a handbook. Check this is acceptable for your stage of career (and your personal life). You may want to discuss this with a senior colleague. Also, realistically, someone must lead the handbook and this person will dedicate substantially more time and energy to it; make sure you have this time if you are lead or sole editor. Perhaps being a co-editor is more appropriate at this time.

*Work with Supportive, Collegial, and Competent Co-Editors:* Collaborate with co-editors that you know you can work with effectively. Meet regularly for updates, logistical decisions, substantive guidance, critical friend feedback, and emotional support. Co-editors will also be very helpful in generating ideas for chapters, authors, and reviewers.

*Understand this is a Non-linear and Layered Project Conducted Over Some Time:* A handbook tends to be conducted in stages of activity that at some point start overlapping. The key stages include: developing a proposal for the publisher; brainstorming and haggling with co-editors and the publisher on authors, chapters, and sections; author invitations and locking in the final list of chapters and sections; receiving and commenting on initial abstracts and titles; receiving first drafts and managing reviews; receiving revisions and potentially further reviews; polishing final chapters; writing your own contribution/s (e.g., introduction, a substantive chapter, conclusion); compiling author biographies and an index; addressing publisher queries and copy-editing; drafting and finalising front, back,

and inside cover text; arranging for electronic and hard copies to be distributed to authors; publicizing through professional associations, social networks, etc. This is often conducted over more than 1-2 years with periods of down-time and periods of intense multi-task activity.

*Wear Many Hats:* Beyond your role as a scholar, there are many other hats you will wear as editor. You will also be: contract reader, trouble shooter, good cop/bad cop, diplomat, copy editor, graphic designer, marketer—and missing persons specialist as some authors fall off the radar.

*Be Flexible and Adaptable:* Every chapter is its own journey—and sometimes a mystery tour! Each chapter and your relationship with its authors and topic evolve in quite an individualistic and idiosyncratic way. You want to capture their individual expertise, yet harmonize that under your vision for the handbook and the other chapters in the handbook. You will need to be flexible and adaptable from chapter to chapter. This may require you to be flexible on time or word limit; or it may require you to be flexible and respectful of an author's conceptual or methodological orientation, while maintaining scholarly rigor.

*Be Profoundly Grateful to Your Authors:* When all is said and done, the handbook sits on the shoulders of the authors. The editor's task is to curate a suite of contributions by leaders in the field to bring together the state-of-the-art in that field and lay a foundation for the years to come. A chapter is usually work on top of what the authors are already doing and they will have to sacrifice some aspect of their own lives to write it. Moreover, because some chapters may require numerous revisions, having a good relationship with authors is vital. This brings us back to your vision for the handbook: with a clear and inspiring vision for the purpose and significance of the handbook, I have found authors are very happy to do what it takes to develop a chapter that shines and will support that vision.



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## ONE TIP IS PUBLISHED

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