

How I Make Time for Writing

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/make-time-writing/>

This entry is part 5 of 7 in the series [How to Start](#)

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I'm often asked, "How do you find time for writing?" In an age of multitasking seminars and rapid-fire infobites, finding the time to do what we really want to do seems extraordinarily difficult.

How do you find time for writing? Well, if you write at all, you know that it's really about *making* time.

So how do you do *that*?

Artwork by Alexandr Ivanov.

We live in a time where it's actually necessary to offer week long seminars on how to de-stress, how to meditate, how to prioritize our efforts, how to organize our time. It's all linked (note the word choice *linked*).

Finding the time to write – or in fact, doing *anything you really want to do* – is difficult. But it isn't impossible. Over the years, I've gained some insight and picked up a few tricks, so I'm going to share that with you, right now.

Ask Yourself (the right) Questions

One of the largest aspects of figuring out how to make time to write is in posing certain questions and

then being brutally honest with yourself. This is a conversation between you and yourself, so there's no need to be overly polite about any of it.

First Question: What do I really want to do?

On the surface, this seems like a simple enough question. But it's a tough one. If we break it down into something more specific, it might look like this:

Do I want to work on that book where I'm stuck or do I want to binge watch *The Flintstones*?

We rarely stop to ask ourselves, conscientiously, such a specific question. We just sort of wander over to the comfy spot in the room and click off the brain.

When I talk to people about how they spend their free time (how they really, *actually* spend it and not how they'd like to spend it), a large portion is used on television and movies. I know from personal experience that there are times I am just flipping exhausted and all I want to do is Zone Out.

Now, I'm not going to claim that I don't watch TV! The EM is on, there's news and TED Talks to watch and I do love certain shows (if you're curious: *Person of Interest* – which sadly is ending, *House of Cards*, and then a slew of awesome shows that were cancelled after only one year because really well written television that appeals to writers has to get cancelled so that we'll get back to writing already).

The Bottom Line

I know that if I want to really consider myself a writer, I need to sit my rear down in a chair and write – every single day. It took me years to achieve this stage, truly. I've been a non-practicing writer much longer than I've been a Real Writer.

So how did I do that – and how do I do it every day? I think SMALLER.

I no longer think about my big dreams and goals; I instead focus on the right now. What can I do right now? I can write... but what?

Second Question: What sort of writing should I do right now?

There is so much involved in being a writer. I think most people tend to think of “being a writer” as the sitting down and writing chapters thing. That's what we do, isn't it?

Well, not so much.

I want to list some key things writers do, because I think it helps outline an important point. First, here's my list of typical writing tasks:

- Research and make notes on different agents who might represent me.
- Draft/ Edit/ Send a query letter. (Note: Drafting and editing and sending are tasks that should

never happen on the same day. So this is at least a 3-day writing project.)

- Research and make notes on something I need for my writing – be it fiction or nonfiction.
- Draft/ Edit/ Publish a blog post. (Again, drafting, editing and publishing is something I don't want to do all in one day. It's best – though not always possible – to give each blog post 3 days.)
- Draft/ Edit/ Rewrite a chapter. This takes time. Drafting is for me the quickest step. Editing slows down and the rewriting is where I really take things slow. Snail's pace writing.
- Answer emails. ([If you blog](#), emailing becomes part of your writing schedule.)
- Outline a new story project. (Sometimes this takes a couple of hours. Sometimes it takes days.)
- Create a [character profile](#). (Again, sometimes a couple of hours – sometimes days.)
- Draft/ Edit/ Rewrite a play, or a ditty, or a short story, or a [storybook](#). (I work with adults, but also with kids – that changes the form of writing I tackle.)

There is too much, always too much. But I'm writing more now than I ever have before and it's in part because I've managed to break down my writing tasks into *tinier pieces*.

For example, it isn't that I need to [get an agent](#). That's too big. I take one part of that process - say, draft a query letter for one project. That is all. I focus on that, do it, then break.

I know that I absolutely cannot sit down and write a novel. Not possible. But I can sit down and start writing the last chapter of a novel or the last scene in a script (I like to start at the end).

My Goal vs. My Task

I want to write many novels and many illustrated storybooks and I know too that I want an awesome literary agent to represent my work. Can I do that right now? Can I get it by the end of the day? No.

But I can sit down and take the *next step* in getting me closer to that, and more importantly, I can enjoy the process. Where I am right now as a writer is where I am. I can pick one thing from my list above, and just do that. One thing.

The Importance of Rest

So do one thing. Then take a break. I have to put effort into taking breaks, otherwise I just write myself into the ground. I'm the type of person who just keeps writing and doesn't feel the time pass.

I suspect many writers and artists are like this.

I think it's because I get too much into my own head, or my imagination – and it doesn't matter if I'm working on fiction or nonfiction. I just am not really aware of my physicality. It's one of the reasons I could never be an actress. I've no idea what my face is doing.

Because of this disconnected relationship I have between my mind and body, I really have to be sure that I *only* draft something, if that's the task I've decided to tackle. Then I stop and get up. I have to leave my desk.

If I transition from drafting to editing right away, I will just continue to work through too many hours. I will forget to eat, forget to drink, forget that actually I need to stop and move around a bit.

When I was younger, I could sit down and bulldoze through 12 hours of fill-in-project-name-here. I could do that, because I was invincible. I really was!

Not so anymore. Now I require rest, and food and stuff like that.

Preferring the Dentist?

Sometimes, the thought of writing makes me cringe. A trip to the dentist sounds better, because even though it's awful – I at least get to recline.

There are times when I am just exhausted but need to sit down and write anyway. It's hard, even after so many years of practice. But what I've learned is that the hardest part of it is right at the beginning – actually, before I've actually sat down to write.

The Computer... is *waiting*.

When I don't feel like writing, the most awful moment is when I am standing in front of my desk, which is the place where my computer lives and is therefore where I write most of the time. I stand and I look at that workplace, and I get a stomach cramp because just the thought of writing makes me feel like, "ugh, no."

What do I do then? One of two things:

- I don't write, or
- I write.

If I Don't Write

If I don't write, it's because I need to absorb – stuff. I don't know exactly what it is, but there are times when I am tapped-out and I need the stuff of life to fill me up again. I don't need food, or physical fuel – I need Spirit Fuel for lack-of-a-better-term – which again, is totally different from getting the creative juices flowing.

I know how to stir up some inspiration, but that isn't this particular type of problem. This problem comes when I am tapped out in every way. The "I got nothin'" moment. There's just *no juice* to get flowing.

This is when I need to leave home. I go out and I see things and people. I move, I breathe, I look. I go to the grocery store and do a jig in the isle. Yes, really. Whatever it takes to make me feel filled up again.

Sometimes, if I'm really burnt-out, I go somewhere I've never seen – or do something I haven't done in a good while. I don't think I've had a spa day in about 5 years, so maybe it's time for one of those again! Next time.

This newness tanks me up again and gives me what I need to go back to my writing place and do what I need to do.

If I Do Write - even when I don't wanna!

If I do sit down to write when the thought of booting up my computer gives me a sharp, shooting pain right through my left eyeball, the first five minutes or so are... painful. It does hurt. But after a while, that pain goes away and I find the pleasure in writing again.

Creativity doesn't come from the stars, it comes from the same type of determination it takes to run a marathon, or direct a movie or do anything else in life that you really want to do. Just do it.

If you want to be more creative, more prolific, do that.

“The secret to getting ahead is getting started.” –[Mark Twain](#)

Most of the Time for Writing

Most often, writing isn't painful for me. But that's only because of the years I practiced sitting down and writing when it did hurt.

I don't want this to sound like the Killing Myself For My Art kind of nonsense I always thought pretentious. That isn't it at all. It's really just about training - exercise.

If you want to run a marathon, would you jump up from the couch, put on your comfiest shoes and run 15 miles? Of course not – you'd start smaller and work your way up to doing more and faster. Plus you'd stretch first.

It's the same thing with writing. You really do have to train yourself, to practice this kind of activity – because it is an activity. You must train your mind and your body to physically sit and get your mind working with words. You have to train your brain.

Don't beat yourself up if you can't write X hours every day. Try 15 minutes a day and see how you do. Then work up to more time for writing. Don't worry if you fall back a bit on some days. The important thing is that you're writing – every day.

As ever...

Keep creating, no matter what.

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