

## How To Write When You Don't Have Time

Everyone in my writers group is self-employed: an editor, a financial advisor, a designer, a photographer. We all have full and demanding lives rich with family and friends and seemingly endless obligations.

What we don't have is time to write.

Yet we pine to write and suffer for not doing it. Weary of complaining about it year after year, we finally found a way to work it into our everyday affairs.

Our plan is called Tuesday Is Writing Day. Here are the rules:

- Time slot and duration of individual choice.
- Session goal = anything that pertains to a personal writing project.
- Minimum work session = half hour.
- By Wednesday morning, e-mail each other with a progress report.
- Repeat the following Tuesday.
- If some external thing interferes, reschedule the time for another day that week.
- Get back on track the following Tuesday.

Legitimate writing work can be composing, revising, outlining, thinking (walks on the beach count, if used as meditative creativity), researching, admin tasks (books are large things, after all, and this category also covers later developments like the recordkeeping that goes with queries), and marketing.

The e-mail report could include "I wrote 10 pages today!" or an attached Word file of the day's output, or simple mention of "I walked the dog for an hour and solved the transition between chapters 2 and 3"—whatever is relevant. All that matters is (1) we do something on the allotted day and (2) we tell each other about it the next morning.

The idea is to establish a discipline while keeping pace with our zillion other duties. We figured that if we did something formal ("I'm working") yet flexible, it would make others more amenable to honoring our boundaries. We are embracing creative work as part of our business plans—a long-term investment with unknown payback (vs. a guilty pleasure to be always shoved aside)—and viewing the time commitment as equivalent to taking an adult-ed or exercise class once a week.

To date we've been at it for six months. In that time we've all put more effort into our projects than the previous few years combined! Are we progressing in leaps and bounds? Nope, but we're progressing, which is the point. Our time chunks have ranged from 30 minutes to 3 hours per week, on another day if we couldn't swing Tuesday. Meanwhile, our enthusiasm has risen phoenix-like from the ashes.

It will be interesting to see where we stand after a year. If the trend continues, the editor will be in revision two of a romance novel; the designer will have finally scratched together a first draft of an erotic romance; the photographer will have finished a long-neglected literary novel about vampirism; and the financial advisor will have blocked out a complete outline and character development plan, with backstories, for a family saga.

Not bad for a bunch of solopreneurs/wives/mothers who don't have time to write!

—Carolyn Haley, DocuMania  
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