

Structure Your Writing Practice

(from Chapter Two of *Create your Writer's Life*)
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You may have some ideas about how to best structure your writing time. We hear the advice, "Write every day," or, "You should write x hours per day." If we don't comply with that structure, we can feel deflated, that we're not 'real' writers. The reality is that we all have busy lives, full of work, family, friends and other commitments. And we can still write.

What works for you? How can you create your own practice? Your structure should honor your daily rhythms. Are a morning person, or a night owl? Are you more inclined to focus on your writing early or later in the day? How much time can you spend on your writing? How much time do you need? One of my clients wouldn't write because when he did, he became so engrossed that he would neglect his other responsibilities. I challenged him to write daily for thirty minutes, no more, no less. This structure worked for him, and now he writes without struggle.

Keep in mind the other obligations that you have. What is non-negotiable? Does hanging out with friends take precedence over your writing commitment? Prioritize and honor your commitments. Make your writing practice the *number one priority* for one week or one month and see what happens.

Recognize your need to stretch and grow as a writer and as a person. Challenge yourself. Try building your structures incrementally so that you are always moving toward the bigger goal of completing your project. Each day do one thing more than you think you can. Or if you are already a tough taskmaster, reduce your to-do list each day by one thing.

Exercise:

Get your calendar out. Schedule your writing time for a week, and try it out. Committing to a smaller chunk of writing time can actually be more effective than trying to write for a larger chunk of time such as an hour or more. The smaller bits are easier to schedule in and easier to sit down for. You can always take more time. See what happens when you schedule your writing time. Make adjustments next week according to how it went this week.