

The Write

Nonfiction

NOW!

Guide to:

**A
WRITING
HABIT**



Nina Amir

The Write Nonfiction NOW! Guide to a Writing Habit

Edited by: Nina Amir



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The Path to Writing Consistently

By: Nina Amir

Today is the day, you tell yourself. I'm going work on my book. I'm going to write.

You sit down in front of your computer and put your fingers on the keyboard. After a minute or two of staring at the blank screen, your fingers twitch as a vague idea flickers across your mind.

Then, the phone rings. Without a second thought, you pick it up. As the conversation progresses, you walk away from the computer.

Or maybe, you decide that doing some laundry will get your creative juices flowing. Or you click on Facebook or your email box looking for inspiration.

Or you never get to the computer at all because other tasks took precedence over writing. Another day passes with "life" simply getting in the way of your goal of becoming a productive writer.

Despite your desire to write, you don't write. And, as a result, your book remains unwritten.

You aren't alone in the challenge to write consistently. Many writers dream of spending hours every day churning out pages of a manuscript. Yet, they don't. Instead, they write when they feel inspired or at different times and on different days when they "find" time. But, more often than not, they do not find time.

I understand. I've been there and done that.

But what about the other writers . . . the prolific ones? How do they become so productive? These writers show up every day and write—no matter what. They remain focused on the job at hand—to produce words, sentences, paragraphs, pages. And, because they do so, they succeed.

Indeed, productive writers write consistently.

They overcome the challenges faced by most writers and succeed. How? They develop a writing habit.

A writing habit might look like working on a book on a set schedule, such as Monday through Thursday for five hours starting at 10 a.m. Or it could look like writing blog posts or articles five days per week, remaining at the computer until a word-count or page-count quota has been met, such as 1,000 words or five pages. Or, possibly, a writing habit consists of writing in a journal every single morning or evening.

Why bother to develop a writing habit? Because it gets you writing consistently. When you do that, you will become a productive writer as well.

The Writing Challenge

I haven't always written daily or even five days per week. In fact, there have been times when a week would pass with me hardly writing a word in my book. I, too, struggled to develop a writing habit. No matter what I tried, I didn't stick with the plan long enough for it to become habitual.

Sometimes, platform building, promotion, and earning a living took precedence over my writing. Even more often, I found myself caught up in family issues and social obligations as well as day-to-day tasks and commitments. And there were many days when I wasted time browsing social media, doing online research, reading and responding to email, and doing just about anything else rather than write.

If someone asked me how much time I spent writing each day, I didn't have a good answer. I didn't write as a predictable daily action. I didn't have time scheduled for writing, nor did I consistently sit down to meet a page-count quota. Thus, I had no idea how much (or how little) I wrote each day.

Developing the Writing Habit

This did not make me happy or productive as a writer. In fact, I did a lot of complaining to my friends about how I wasn't finding time to write, specifically to work on book projects—just like my clients! Those friends who were also coaches, encouraged me to do what, as a Certified High Performance Coach, I knew I needed to do (and told my clients to do): create a writing schedule. Even better, I was told to block out time each

day to work on my most important writing project first thing in the morning . . . before anything else.

And so, I revamped my schedule and made writing my priority.

Now I work on my current book manuscript five days per week. I do this first thing in the morning for two hours. I'm flexible on the weekends, allowing myself time to fill my creative well with time off or, if necessary or I feel the desire, to write.

For a little bit of accountability, during the week sometimes I write in the company of other people using a "remote workspace"—a Zoom videoconference room. We check in for a minute and share what we will be working on that morning. (I always say the same thing—"my book.") We work for two hours—muted but with video on so we see each other working, and, when the time is up, we celebrate our accomplishments.

After that two-hour block of time, I continue writing for another hour or two. During this time block, I write blog posts or work on other writing projects, like this eBook. I also compose promotional emails, social media posts, and sales page copy.

These days, I try, at all costs, not to disrupt my writing schedule. If I must meet with a client, I get up earlier to ensure I write for at least an hour before I turn my attention to the coaching session. As a result, I can honestly and proudly say I have a writing habit. I write first thing in the morning at least five days per week consistently.

Consistency Leads to Productivity

I'm most productive when I stick to my five-day per week writing schedule—when I keep my habit by writing consistently. Let that slip away, and my days become unproductive and my book gets forgotten.

As long as I stick to my consistent writing practice, I'm also happier. Accomplishing my most important work early in the day makes me feel good about myself and my progress and boosts my self-confidence. Also, my writing habit leads me to a greater sense that I am fulfilling my purpose as a writer. Plus, as an added bonus, I don't feel like I have to write on the weekend if I don't want to.

My writing habit also solidifies my identity; I can say I am a writer without hesitation—after all, I write consistently.

How to Use This Ebook

I tell you about my experience, so you know that you are not alone in your struggle to write consistently. I also tell you this so you know that you can develop a writing habit. You can be consistently productive on the days you choose to write.

And this eBook is meant to help you do just that.

I've compiled my best work on the topic of developing a consistent writing habit. Plus, I asked some of the most productive writers I know to offer their tips and strategies as well. I've included chapters by bestselling and award-winning writers, even the head of a publishing house.

Don't be surprised to see some overlap in the advice offered in each chapter and by different writers. Some things just work. If you hear the same advice enough times in different ways, you are more likely to take note and implement the strategy in your life.

Let me stress that point: Don't just read the advice offered in these pages, take action on it.

Choose one or two of the strategies in this book, and put them to use every day for at least two months. Then add in another tip or tool for 60 or more days. Track your progress. See if your results change.

You do not have to write daily to create a writing habit. However, choosing to write at least five days per week will help solidify the habit much more quickly. That said, you can choose to write on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, as an example, if you prefer. The choice is yours. Whatever schedule you pick, use one or more of the strategies presented here to help you write consistently.

Creating a Writing Habit Takes Time

Don't expect to develop a writing habit overnight. Creating a habit takes time. Remember that.

Some experts say it takes 30 days; others, like Phillippa Lally, a health psychology researcher at University College London, say it takes longer.

In [a study](#) published in the European Journal of Social Psychology, Lally and her research team set out to determine just how long it actually takes to form a habit. The

study examined the habits of 96 people over a 12-week period. Each person chose one new habit for the 12 weeks and reported each day on whether or not they did the behavior and how automatic the behavior felt.

The result of the study? On average, it takes 66 days before a new behavior becomes automatic. The length of time it takes to form a new habit varies widely depending on the behavior, the person, and the circumstances. Lally reported that it can take anywhere from 18 days to 254 days for people to form a new habit.

With this in mind, I suggest you commit to a writing schedule for two to three months. At that point, you should have a habit. If you aren't consistently keeping to your writing schedule at that point, don't give up. You might just need more time.

Eventually, though, writing consistently—even daily—will become habitual. You won't wonder if you are going to write today; you will know you are going to write because that's what you always do.

If the first strategy you choose to help you develop a writing habit doesn't reap rewards, come back to this book and choose another. Try that one for two or three months. Hopefully, it will be the ticket to your writing habit.

Believe me, I've tried more than a few strategies. But in the end, I found I needed to do one thing to develop a writing habit—write consistently. Ultimately, you'll need to do the same.

THE FUNDAMENTALS

How to Use “Tiny Habits” to Establish a Daily Writing Practice

By: Mary Jaksch

You dream of being a writer. Maybe you even feel there is a book within you.

Each New Year, you resolve to do it. To start writing regularly. To begin working on a book or a blog.

But what happens?

You get too busy.

You don't have the energy.

You can't find the time.

Your health or the health of a dear one falters.

You doubt whether you have what it takes.

But deep within lies your dream, waiting for you, year after year.

You can't erase this dream of becoming a writer. *Because this dream is the message you are destined to share with the world.*

But how to do it? How to make this dream a reality?

How to start and not give up?

There is only one way to do it. You need to write. Every day.

It's a challenge. However, there is a simple way to overcome this challenge without using willpower or needing a dose of discipline.

You need to establish a *tiny habit* of daily writing.

According to behavioral scientist, BJ Fogg, there are two ways to change behavior in the long-term: either change your environment or take baby steps.

Most people who want to create a new habit choose a big goal and experience a burst of enthusiasm, which is then eventually followed by failure when momentum stalls and motivation wanes. I bet you know all about this.

However, with the strategy of tiny habits, you'll be able to develop a new daily writing habit with ease without having to use willpower or discipline to achieve your goal.

The Secret of Tiny Habits

Fogg says a “tiny habit” is a behavior that:

- You do at least **once a day**.
- Takes you **less than 30 seconds to do**.
- Requires **little effort**.

Let’s take a look at what a tiny writing habit could be. Remember, your habit needs to be ridiculously small and easy to accomplish, so you only need a minimum of *activation energy* (the energy to start a habit). The smaller the habit, the less energy you need to establish it.

A Tiny Daily Writing Habit

A simple way to set writing goals is to determine a word count.

Let’s think of a daily word count quota that is hard to miss. What about building a daily habit of writing just 20 words, which is about two sentences?

Wait! Only two sentences?

It sounds too easy, doesn’t it? And you may wonder if it’s enough. How could two sentences each day possibly lead to completing an article or a book?

Let go of your big dreams for now, and remember that you are establishing a new writing habit.

This habit is going to nurture your dream. Once your new tiny writing habit is established, it will grow of its own accord. And, after the first few weeks, you’ll be raring to write more than just 20 words.

Are YOU prepared to commit to writing just two sentences each day?

But what to write about?

In her book, *The Artist’s Way*, Julia Cameron suggests starting the day with *morning pages*. This means writing three pages of whatever comes into your mind in a journal. We can take this idea for our twenty-word tiny habit. Write twenty words (or two sentences) from your stream of consciousness into a journal each morning.

How to Make Tiny Habits Work

According to Fogg, three steps make tiny habits easy to establish:

Schedule your new tiny habit after an existing, daily habit.

Eliminate friction to make your tiny habit easy to perform.

Celebrate each time you activate your tiny habit.

Let's take a look at each of these three steps in detail.

1. Schedule your new tiny habit after an existing, daily habit.

This helps you to anchor the new habit in your routine. The current habit then becomes a trigger event for the new tiny habit.

In my experience, writing in the early morning is a great way to start your day. The trick is to include writing in your regular sequence of events.

Think of an action you routinely do every morning. You get out of bed and go to the bathroom. What then? Do you have a shower? Try taking a few minutes to write after going to the bathroom and before having a shower.

2. Eliminate friction to make your tiny habit easy to perform.

It's essential to make it very easy to activate the new tiny habit. The problem we all suffer from is *decision fatigue*.

Creating a habit saves us from having to make new decisions each time we contemplate starting to write. Every action needs a decision to trigger it. Even small actions, like finding your journal, finding a pen or your digital notebook, or clearing a desk or table, need a decision. And these decisions create friction.

To eliminate friction, prepare your tiny writing habit the evening before by laying out your journal and pen (or your digital notebook) where you want to write. In this way, you won't need to make any further decisions in the morning, except for sitting down and writing. This preparation is a cognitive commitment to your tiny habit.

3. Celebrate each time you activate your tiny habit.

Celebrating the achievement of your tiny habit is an excellent way of reinforcing your new routine because it strengthens the new neural pathway you're creating. Try using a fist pump or saying out loud, "Yeah, I did it!"

But what about motivation? How can you keep your motivation sharp?

How to Stay Motivated

Motivation is not a fixed entity. It fluctuates. When we face a challenge, our motivation naturally tends to dip.

We long to be motivated *before* we take action. However, it's rare for anyone to be motivated in advance of a challenging task. Just ask any athlete. For example, even though I love karate practice, I often feel reluctant to go to the hard classes for black belts. Nevertheless, I hardly ever miss my black-belt classes each week because there is something I know about motivation:

Motivation arises out of action.

Once you start, motivation follows. You see, motivation is the result of action and not its cause. When you get started, even with just two sentences, you tap into active inspiration that will help you establish a joyful daily writing habit.

How to Turn Your Writing Passion Into a Habit

By: Linda Kane

Why do writers write? To educate, inspire, or share skills or expertise. Sometimes writing provides an individual with a useful source of grounding and stress release. A person may write because they cannot imagine doing anything else, or, simply, because they love to write.

More often than not, they write to express a passion for writing.

But sometimes writers write in fits and spurts. So how do they write consistently? Writers tap into their passion for writing and practice what they love. In the process, they make writing a habit.

You can do the same by regularly expressing your passion for writing.

4 Ways to Develop a Writing Habit

According to researchers at Duke University, habits account for about 40 percent of our behaviors on any given day. Understanding how to build habits will help you progress toward the ability to write consistently.

What is a habit? According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, it's "an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary" or "a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition or physiologic exposure that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance."

You want a writing habit. When you have one, you will write consistently.

Try these nine habit-forming strategies:

1. Start with a small writing habit.

Make it easy, so you cannot say no to yourself. When people struggle to build a new habit, they say things like, "I need more motivation," or, "I wish I had more willpower."

That is the wrong approach. Research shows that willpower is like a muscle; it has to be used daily for success.

To solve this problem, begin with something easy, and record your writing goal on a calendar or in a planner every day. You may decide that 50 words or 100 words are enough. (Remember . . . *tiny habits*.) Commit to that goal every day. Make your goal easy enough that you can get it done without motivation. (Remember . . . *Motivation arises out of action*.) Be intentional.

2. Increase your habit in a very small way.

Success is a few simple disciplines practiced every day. Rather than trying to write an entire nonfiction book, start small, such as with an essay, article, or chapter. Gradually increase the amount of time or words you write. Along the way, your willpower and motivation will increase, which will make it easier to stick to your habit of writing.

One popular habit-building method is called the 21/90 Rule. Commit to writing for twenty-one straight days. After those three weeks, the pursuit of that goal should become a habit. Once you have established the habit, continue writing daily for another 90 days. Just add days to your calendar, and mark those days off with a red “X” on each day that you wrote. Don’t break the chain.

3. Break writing into chunks.

If you’ve decided to write a book, chunk the process down into manageable pieces. You could begin with an outline. Next, set the goal of writing your first chapter, and so on. Eventually, you’ll have a full-length book completed.

Or chunk down your time. Decide to write an hour each day. Some people set timers, so they don’t keep looking at a clock. Eventually, you will not need a timer.

You also can build a writing habit with small writing assignments. Keep a journal, write a blog post, or compose essays or articles—and do so on a daily or weekly schedule.

4. Be patient with yourself.

Learning to be patient is perhaps the most critical skill of all. You can make incredible progress if you are consistent and patient. Stick to a pace you can sustain. Eventually, you will have a writing habit.

5. Pay attention to your body clock.

Knowing your body and what affects your energy and alertness can help you zero in on the times of day when you perform writing tasks most effectively. What is the best time for you to write? Early morning, afternoon, evening, or late at night?

Most adults perform best in the late morning. Your body temperature starts to rise just before awakening in the morning and continues to increase through midday. Your working memory, alertness, and concentration will gradually improve in response.

6. Create a writing space.

Set up a quiet, well-lit place to write. Have your computer, writing utensils, dictionary, thesaurus, notepads, paper, and journals close at hand. Keep a notebook to record catchy words, phrases, or sentences that have captured your interest.

Keep your writing area clean! Remove any distractions.

7. Identify yourself as a writer.

Tell yourself—and others—that you are a writer. Then write. Show up, and do the work to master your passion. After all, writers write.

8. Educate yourself.

Take online publishing classes, beginning writing classes at your local community college, or blogging classes at extension programs offered by a nearby university.

You also can sign up for online or in-person programs related to your area of interest or expertise. Let your passion pick your curriculum for you.

9. Take breaks to avoid burnout.

If you never take breaks during the day, go on vacation, or take time for self-care, you'll find yourself struggling to write. And, eventually, you will experience burnout. Be sure to implement time in your schedule to fill your creative well.

My Writing Habit

If you wonder if I “do as I say,” *I do!*

I find getting into a positive mindset helps me focus, and the best time of day for me to begin writing is at three o'clock in the afternoon. Every day at that time I go to my office. Everything I need is close at hand, including my journal, in which early that morning I listed my thoughts and ideas for what I want to accomplish that afternoon. Pencils, paper, and of course, my computer is there waiting in anticipation for me to continue writing my journey.

I sit down, and I write.

Writing became my purpose, my passion, and eventually, an excellent habit to take me on the journey to authorship.

A writing habit begins with your effort to write consistently. Before long, it won't be an effort. It will just be how you express your passion every day.

7 Steps to Developing a Daily Writing Practice

By: Tom Corson-Knowles

Whether you're looking to finish your first book or simply hone your writing skills, a daily writing practice can help you reach your goals.

Not only that, but it also can be extremely therapeutic. By putting down all of your thoughts and ideas for the day on paper, you can better work out what you're feeling and why. (Bonus: This therapy is completely free!)

But to maintain a daily writing practice, you'll need to stay focused, committed, and follow a few simple steps.

The Importance of Writing Regularly

Keeping your commitment will require you to make writing a habit, a part of your daily routine. When something becomes habitual, it means we don't even have to think about that action anymore—we just do it.

Did you have to think about brushing your teeth, getting dressed, or turning on your coffee machine this morning? Probably not.

Your goal should be to make sitting down and writing just as automatic. The best way to do this is by establishing a process that is simple and, hopefully, enjoyable for you.

How to Develop a Daily Writing Practice

These seven tips will help you establish a successful daily writing routine so you can beat procrastination once and for all.

1. Find your productive hours.

Different people work best at different times. Perhaps you hit your stride as you sip your morning coffee before the rest of the house is up and running. Or, perhaps you're a night owl who does her best work with the murmur of late-night talk shows in the background.

Either of these options is perfectly fine as long as you feel like you're in your peak productivity hour.

What *doesn't* work is telling yourself you'll write "sometime today" or "sometime tomorrow."

Why not?

Because life happens. You'll get swept up in helping your kids with homework or a work meeting that runs unexpectedly late. Before you know it, it's nearly midnight, and you're just about ready to sleep when suddenly you realize that you were supposed to write today.

To avoid this cycle and replace it with a successful routine, choose a dedicated time—one in which you know you won't be interrupted or distracted—and write at that hour every day.

2. Create a conducive space.

If your cramped desk facing the wall of a gloomy guest bedroom doesn't inspire you to write, I don't blame you. You'll be far more likely to stick with (and maybe even look forward to) your writing routine if you have a space in which you actually enjoy spending time.

Don't have one? Make one!

Clear off a writing surface, and try to keep it as decluttered as possible. If you'd like, keep just a few photos on your desk of a place or person that inspires you or reminds you of your goals.

You might also add a soothing candle or whatever you need to feel relaxed and focused.

Make your writing space one you actually *want* to spend time in, and you'll see the difference in your productivity.

3. Set goals.

Each day before you begin writing, establish a clear, measurable goal. For example, maybe you want to write 500 words, two pages, or for one uninterrupted hour.

Write your goal down on your calendar or daily agenda planner. This will help you visualize your goal while also keeping you accountable. Plus, there's nothing more satisfying than crossing off a task that will bring you one step closer to your bigger dreams.

Make sure that your goals are clearly defined but also realistic enough that you can achieve them if you stay focused. By setting lofty goals, you're only setting yourself up for disappointment when you fail to reach them—and that will likely discourage you from continuing altogether.

4. Be prepared.

Returning to your writing space, it's important to keep your area neat but also ready for your next session.

If you write early in the morning, for instance, take a few minutes the evening before to tidy up your desk, charge your laptop, etc. This will save you precious time in the morning and help you get started with more momentum.

5. Eliminate distractions.

Even if you're used to working with the TV on or some classic rock playing, it probably hasn't done your productivity any favors.

Try swapping out talk shows and reality TV for some classical music, soft ambient noise, or just the natural sounds of your backyard.

Disable any distracting notifications from social media. In fact, you may just want to go ahead and leave your phone in another room. You also can set up your notifications to alert you only when select contacts call or message.

This one may seem pretty hard at first, but you'll find that you can accomplish so much more when you aren't tempted to stalk your friend's tropical getaway on Instagram or lose an hour watching dog videos on YouTube.

If you *do* happen to enjoy watching dog videos, you can use that as a motivating force to get your work done. Tell yourself that once you've reached your daily goal, you'll reward yourself by watching your favorite videos, taking a walk, or calling up a friend—any little thing you enjoy and that will keep you going.

6. Take breaks.

I can't stress this one enough. Just as it's critical to stay focused when you're trying to be productive, it's also important to take breaks.

If your daily writing practice involves more than an hour of writing, don't forget to be gentle with yourself and take breaks as needed.

It might feel like the best and quickest way to reach your goal is to just sit down and write non-stop. But taking a few minutes to walk around outside, stretch, or make yourself a cup of tea can actually do wonders for your mind and creativity.

If you're up against some frustrating writer's block, the best thing to do is take a break and refresh your mind. This way, when you're ready, you can return to your work with fresh eyes and ideas.

7. Use writing prompts.

Writing prompts are a great way to get your ideas flowing and inspire yourself out of a creative rut. These bits of text, images, beginning of sentences, or subjects provide a starting point for a piece of writing.

If you're simply trying to fine-tune your writing skills, writing prompts can help you by providing a fresh topic each day.

However, they also can be extremely helpful for anyone working on a novel, nonfiction book, or more substantial project. If you're encountering writer's block, try out a few prompts to see if they inspire you with new ideas.

Practice Makes Perfect

A daily writing practice can help you become a better writer and a stronger communicator. You may also find that it provides therapeutic benefits, as well.

So, what are you waiting for? Find your comfiest chair, grab a pen, and start writing!

How to Develop a Consistent Daily Writing Practice

By: Marc Guberti

Daily writing makes you a better writer and provides you with more content to share with your audience. However, writing every single day isn't always easy. Things happen that can get in the way of writing consistently and forming a daily writing habit.

Daily writing starts with total clarity. Too many writers go into the day not sure what they will write about next. They know what book, article, blog, or other projects they have to complete, but they don't know precisely what part they need to compose or what topic they need to tackle.

If you briefly look through the projects in front of you and assign different projects—or parts of projects—to different days, you'll increase your clarity about what you need to write on any given day. This clarity will help you sit down daily and write without staring at a blank screen.

Clarity Alone Is Not Enough

You can be crystal clear on what you need to write, but if you don't schedule writing time daily, your calendar will get busy with non-writing tasks quickly. At night, before you go to bed, look at your schedule for the following day and pencil in a time where you will do nothing but produce content. Doing so ensures you have a set time when you must write rather than writing whenever you feel like it or time allows.

When choosing a time to write, I recommend writing at the start of your day and scheduling additional time later, if possible. Even if you wake up a little earlier so you can write for the first 15 minutes of your day, you put yourself at a massive advantage. Writing at the beginning of the day primes you to write multiple times throughout the day. It also will make it easier to transition into longer writing sessions later in the day since you started your day by writing.

Speak Your Writing into Existence

If you feel pressed for time, you can speak your writing into existence. This option makes it possible to write in almost any situation. You can write content in the traditional format (i.e., sitting at your desk and typing on your computer), but voice gives you another option. On a walk or drive, you can speak your writing project and use an app like Otter.ai to transcribe what you say. This also will help you produce more content, since the average person speaks at 150 words per minute. On the other hand, the average person types at a rate of 40 words per minute.

Don't consider speaking your writing into existence as just an option for a day when you don't have time to write. Think of it as a way to create more content faster. In fact, we pause and think less when we speak, and those pauses are much shorter when we speak than when we write.

There are pros and cons to speaking versus typing content into existence. However, try incorporating both of these approaches within your writing strategy.

Write, Just Write

One of the big mistakes writers make is that they don't *just* write each day. While they write, they also proofread, format, and edit.

When you write, just write. Don't go back to past work or paragraphs. You can address those later. Let the words flow, and don't think twice. The less you pause to think when you write, the better it will be for your flow and daily writing habit.

When you're done writing and want to wrap up, then you can address the post-writing tasks, such as editing. You also can schedule editing on your calendar later in the day during a time when you are less productive as a writer. Understanding when you are and are not a productive writer allows you to schedule the rest of your tasks accordingly.

With these strategies in place, you will have an easier time writing new content every day and developing a daily writing habit. Know that the first few days of developing a new writing habit are always the hardest, but it will get easier every day. Even if you only have the time to write for two to five minutes on some days, write.

Writing every day builds the habit. If you are patient and continue building the habit long enough, writing daily will soon feel effortless.

How to Use a Daily Word-Count Quota to Help You Write Consistently

By: Nina Amir

You've decided that a daily word-count quota sounds like a good strategy for creating a daily writing habit. Super! Let's break that strategy down a little further so you can use it effectively.

A daily word quota goal gives you a daily writing goal, and, when you achieve it, you feel as if you accomplished something. Plus, if you have a deadline for turning in a magazine article, for instance, a daily word count helps you turn in an article that is the required length and to do so on time. The same is true of a book. If you want to complete the first draft of the manuscript by a certain date and you know the approximate length of the completed project, you can determine how many words you must write to accomplish that goal.

Let's say you want to write a 60,000-word book or a 7,000-word eBook, you may want to consider writing more than 20 words per day—remember the tiny writing habit?—as suggested earlier. Of course, you can write 20 words per day, especially as you begin developing a daily writing habit, but it will take you a long time to complete either the 60,000-word or 7,000-word manuscript.

Consider Tom Wolfe, who wrote many popular books (that later were made into movies), such as *The Right Stuff* and *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. It took him 11 years to finish *A Man in Full*. He composed this 370,000-word novel by averaging 135 words per day.

I could imagine getting quite frustrated by working on the same book for that long—but he had a tiny writing habit. And he stuck with it. You can do the same.

Yet, most successful authors write a minimum of 500 to 600 words per day; most write several thousand. Their writing habits keep them moving toward completion at a much quicker pace.

Develop a Daily Word-Count Goal

If you want to use a daily word-count quota as motivation to write daily, develop a goal. How many words will you write per day? And plan to accomplish that goal by habitually sitting down at the computer daily to meet your quota.

Let's say you want to write a 60,000-word book. You want to complete it in three months. (I know . . . That sounds like a really short amount of time, but it's possible. I know; I've done it.) How will you do that?

First, you must decide on a daily word-count goal. That means you need to know how many words you must write each day (or however many days per week you intend to work on the project).

I'm going to assume you plan to sit at your desk and write five days per week. (Many prolific and productive writers only work Monday through Friday.) That means you need to produce 1,000 words per day; that's your daily word-count goal.

How'd I come up with that number? Simple. I multiplied 5 (days per week) by 4 (weeks in an average month) and came up with 20 (writing days per month). I then multiplied 20 (writing days per month) by 3 (months), which amounts to 60 days of writing total. Next, I divided 60,000 (words in the completed manuscript) by 60 (writing days over the course of three months).

Do the math yourself . . . You need to write 1,000 words per day to complete your manuscript in three months

That's pretty doable, right? Of course, it is. And it will keep you writing consistently for three months, by which time you will have developed a pretty solid daily writing habit.

Let's look at a 7,000-word eBook and assume you will write six days per week for three months:

$$6 \text{ (days)} \times 4 \text{ (weeks)} = 24 \text{ (writing days per month)}$$

$$24 \text{ (writing days per month)} \times 3 \text{ (months)} = 72 \text{ (writing days total)}$$

$$7,000 \text{ (desired manuscript goal)} \div 72 \text{ (writing days total)} = 97 \text{ (words per day)}$$

That's fewer words per day than Wolfe wrote! (It's a tiny habit!)

Obviously, you could finish writing the eBook much faster. For instance, you could change your goal from a three-month completion date to a one-month completion date. In this scenario, you could finish the book on time by meeting a word-count goal of writing 291 words per day—still doable.

If you plan to write a book in a month, whether fiction for National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) or nonfiction for the [Write Nonfiction in November Challenge](#), it's essential to have a daily word-count plan. NaNoWriMo requires completion of 50,000 words in 30 days; that a quota of 1,667 words per day.

During my [Write Your Transformational Book Challenge](#), I encourage those writing for change to compose 700 words daily for three months. In that time, they produce a 60,000-word manuscript and get the added bonus of a writing habit.

Your turn. Determine the desired length of your book project. And then create a daily word-count quota.

Once you've done so, meet your goal daily. That's the only plan you need to get your manuscript done in a timely manner—and use a daily word-count goal to help you write consistently.

ADVANCED TACTICS

There's More to Writing Consistently Than Writing

By: Nina Amir

There's more to writing than writing. Everything in your life affects your ability to write—your personal life, professional life, hobbies, emotional state, physical state, ability to focus, habits, mindsets, the conditions in which you live . . . All of this—and more—has a huge effect on whether or not you sit down and produce written words daily.

That's why you can't focus just on writing when trying to develop a daily writing practice. If you want to write, you have to learn to navigate your life—internally and externally.

Life Destroys Focus

Recently I found myself worried about one of my children. The more my mind ruminated on my child and his condition, the less focused I became on my work in progress. I also found my energy waning. Additionally, my mood declined, causing me to feel less motivated to write.

As you can imagine, my productivity decreased considerably during this time. I felt like I couldn't and didn't want to write.

I recently returned from a short trip to Europe. I came back feeling a little sick and jet lagged. I couldn't seem to catch up on my sleep. As a result, every time I'd sit down to write, I felt tired and “yucky.” I wrote . . . but not much.

I'm sure you can relate even if your situation is different than mine. Life distracted me, and I bet sometimes it distracts you, too.

You Are the Distraction

It's true—sometimes life gets in the way of writing. That doesn't only happen when you are called away to take care of an elderly parent or sick child, your car breaks down, your spouse asks for a divorce, or you have a crisis at your day job.

Life also “happens” when you don't address your internal state of being—your stress, depression, anxiety, or negativity. You need strategies for dealing with life, so your internal state remains balanced.

Here's the truth of the matter: How you respond to life provides the distractions that keep you from writing. Your internal state provides the real reason you can't focus.

Simply said: You are the problem. More specifically, your emotions and thoughts stand in the way of writing consistently. They distract you.

How do you ensure you have the clarity, energy, habits, and mindset to help you write productively? How do you handle your emotions and thoughts, so they don't get in the way of churning out the words? These are important questions, and your answers provide insight about how to write more productively *no matter what*.

Work on You—the Writing Will Follow

To become a productive and successful writer, work on yourself first. Then work on your current writing project.

I push myself to develop mindsets and habits that support my writing. In other words, I work on me. I put an enormous amount of energy and time into my personal development. Doing so allows me to better deal with whatever threatens to take me away from writing or make it hard to write productively. The more often and more closely I examine my thoughts, beliefs, mindsets, and habits, the more effectively I am able to manage my thoughts, emotions and behaviors—including how consistently and productively I write.

When I manage my internal environment, I manage my external environment and the situations in which I find myself. I, therefore, can write productively no matter what life throws my way.

The Three Internal States That Stop You from Writing

Three primary internal states impact your writing. They are:

1. Energy
2. Emotions
3. Mindset

If your physical energy is low or negative—you are tired, lethargic, or fidgety, you'll find it difficult to write. You might feel foggy headed, distracted, or unable to focus, and this could be a result of physical habits, like not sleeping enough or drinking an adequate amount of water.

If your emotions are negative—you feel anger, fear, sadness, stress, or frustration—you will struggle to write. But emotions are a result of your thoughts.

Thus, if your mindset is negative—you are focused on limiting beliefs and self-defeating thoughts, you'll also struggle to write. It's hard to put words on the page when your mind is constantly telling you that what you write will never be published, you won't be able to handle success, or you aren't a good enough writer.

Keep in mind that your emotional and mental state affect your physical energy as well. All three are integrally related.

Four Ways to Manage Your Internal State

Here are four ways to manage these three internal states and maintain internal equilibrium so you can write productively every day.

- 1. Sleep**—Your body requires rest. It also craves a consistent sleep schedule. Most of us need seven or eight hours of sleep to function at our best. When you feel rested, you come to the day and the computer with clarity and focus. You make better decisions. When something disrupts your day, you can maintain a positive internal state. You deal with situations differently if you are rested versus tired. Generally, you feel more positive if you sleep enough as well. Your physiology affects how you think and feel—and, therefore, how you write.
- 2. Diet**—You may think diet has nothing to do with how productively you write or deal with the stressors in your life. However, just like sleep, diet affects your physiology, which affects your ability to be effective and deal with whatever comes up during the day on an emotional level, too. Some foods make you feel

more lethargic, give you a sugar high (and then low), or cause brain fog. Watch which foods help, rather than hinder, your ability to maintain high energy and a positive attitude so you write effectively.

3. Movement—Your body is meant to move, not to sit at a desk for hours on end. Plus, your energy level and emotional state are affected by your physiology. If you are feeling stressed, depressed, or worried, go for a walk, take a run, or lift weights. You'll release helpful hormones that assist in raising your energy level and improving your emotional state. That means you'll be better equipped to handle what life throws your way—and to write productively in the midst of chaos.

4. Routines and Habits—It's amazing how the things we do daily affect our success as writers. Many of your routines or habits, however, likely don't help you write consistently. If you have a routine of doing everything else before you write, your work in progress remains your lowest priority, which means many days it won't get your attention. If you have a habit of focusing on negative thoughts and self-talk, your mental chatter can keep you feeling that you aren't good enough, can't do it, or are a failure. If you don't know when you're thinking such thoughts, pay attention to your feelings. Your emotions turn negative when you are focused on negative thoughts.

You Need New Routines

To become a successful and productive writer, you need new routines. Your current habits have only helped you achieve your current level of success. If you aren't happy with that level, create new habits that help you level up.

You might meditate each morning before you sit down to write, so you approach your work with clarity and focus. Or you could use your lunch break for writing. Perhaps you could spend time each day visualizing your desired outcomes and then taking three actions to get closer to that goal.

You decide on the routines and habits that will help you maintain internal equilibrium and write productively each day.

The Antidote to a Disruptive Internal State

If you need some help getting a handle on the “other” things that affect your writing—meaning your internal state, consider hiring a coach. When I first hired a Certified High Performance Coach, my writing world—in fact, my whole world (internally and externally)—changed dramatically for the better. Suddenly, I had more control over my internal state, which meant I could control the results I achieved externally with my work in progress.

Recently when I struggled to make writing a priority and maintain a daily writing practice, I turned to my coach once again. He helped me plan my perfect writing day, and I’ve stuck to that schedule ever since.

I’ve noticed that as I work with writers on their [personal development](#), they gain more clarity, courage, energy, productivity, and influence in all areas of their lives. And they begin to write consistently every day. They master their psychology and physiology, and that helps them master their writing.

To become a successful and productive writer—to write consistently every day—you have to do more than write. You have to take control of your internal state. When you do that, you’ll get out of your own way and find writing daily comes naturally.

How to Develop Habits That Help You Write Consistently

By: Nina Amir

A lot of aspiring writers say they want to write, but they don't. Others say they write consistently but, in truth, they aren't productive. They get distracted or procrastinate. Some simply write inconsistently.

No matter what type of writer you are, here's the truth: You can improve your current level of writing and publishing success by improving your habits.

Do your current habits—personal or professional—serve you? Do they help you achieve your writing goals, or do they hinder your progress?

Even if they help you, you can improve your results by creating even more-supportive habits. And, if your habits have been holding you back, it's time to create new ones that help you achieve your writing goals.

Your Past Success Leaves Clues

Any success you've had previously in your attempt to write consistently provides a key to how you can develop a writing habit now. If you don't remember a time when you successfully wrote daily, then look to others who have accomplished this goal.

“Long ago, I realized that success leaves clues,” writes Tony Robbins in *Unlimited Power: The New Science of Personal Achievement*, “and that people who produce outstanding results do specific things to create those results. I believed that if I precisely duplicated the actions of others, I could reproduce the same quality of results that they had.”

Indeed, you can mimic other writer's supportive habits and increase your ability to succeed.

Consider the habits of these successful writers:

- Novelist Haruki Murakami's routine involves getting up at four a.m. and working for five to six hours.

- Ernest Hemmingway wrote every morning “as soon after first light as possible.”
- Maya Angelou went to a rented hotel room and arrived there every day at 6:30 or 7:00 a.m. and didn’t leave until 2 p.m.
- Barbara Kingsolver started writing when the kids left for school and ended when the bus dropped them off in the afternoon.
- Toni Morrison wrote before dawn—and before her kids woke up and she had to go to work.
- Stephen King writes for three to four hours per day, starting around 8 or 8:30 a.m. with the goal of producing six pages.
- Alice Munro writes every morning, seven days per week, starting about eight o’clock and finishing around eleven and, during that time, meets a page quota.

Think of a time in the past when you felt productive and successful. What was it about that time in your life that helped you achieve the results you desired? Were you focused, under a deadline, or passionate about the project? Did you have a schedule and stick to it?

By identifying what made you successful in the past, you can replicate your results. You need only adopt the same habits you had at that time.

After all, success leaves clues. Follow them to the habits you need to implement now.

Imagine Your Best Future Writing Self

If you can’t think of habits that served you in the past, or if those practices don’t apply to your current desire to succeed as a writer, you need to adopt a new habit.

Imagine yourself as a successful and productive writer. What would that look like? Would you be rising early to write for two hours before going to work or your children wake up? Would you exercise and then show up at your desk to write? Would you work toward a firm deadline? Would you remain focused and ignore email and social media

sites? Would you write every afternoon or evening after work in your favorite coffee shop?

Once you can see this mental picture of your best writing self clearly, answer this question: *What one habit would you have to adopt to become your best writing self?*

Maybe you need to go to bed early and get up early. Possibly you need to create a morning routine. Or you might need to set a timer during your scheduled writing time and write until it rings.

Whatever the habit, commit to taking it on for two months or more. Remember: To ingrain a new habit into your standard way of operating—or writing—you must practice it daily for an average of 66 days.

Once you've chosen your new helpful writing habit, get started immediately. Don't wait. It's time . . . your time to become your best writing self.

Write First . . . Do Everything Else Later

By: Nina Amir

How do you begin your writing day? If you are like most people, the first thing you do is check your phone to see if you've gotten any messages. You also may answer emails and reply to social media posts. And you handle priorities—your own or someone else's priorities.

But you don't write first.

Writing isn't one of the things you do *first thing* in the morning. It's not a priority.

In fact, if you are like most aspiring writers, writing comes last . . . after everything else gets done (or if it all gets done).

If you do, indeed, write first thing in the morning—before you do anything else, congratulations! You are one of the few, and I bet you're a [productive writer](#)!

How do I know this? Because when you begin your day with time spent on your most important project—your current writing work in progress—you achieve three things:

1. You set the tone for the entire day.
2. You make progress on your manuscript consistently each day.
3. You develop a writing habit.

Think about the past week or two . . . How often did you make writing a priority? How much progress did you make on your manuscript? Did you write first—or do other things first? And how much writing time did you lose by taking on other tasks before you sat down to write?

I hear you . . .

You have to get the kids off to school before you write. You have to go to your day job first. You have to respond to those emails first and foremost. And there's yoga class and walking the dogs, too.

Get Up Earlier

In fact, you *do not* have to do those things first. You can write first—even if it means getting up earlier to do so. Then you can do those other so-called priorities on your to-do list.

Plenty of people get up an hour or two earlier and start their days with writing. (They even make the dogs wait.) They may have an entire morning ritual, but writing is part of it.

Speaking for myself, if I do anything else before I write, I don't end up writing—or not for as long as I planned. I am most productive as a writer when I block out time from 7 a.m. until 9 a.m. to write.

I roll out of bed at about 6:30 a.m., wash my face and brush my teeth, put on some clothes, grab a bottle of water, and head for my desk. I turn on the computer, and then I write. (No . . . I haven't eaten. I don't have coffee. I haven't exercised or done any type of ritual to invoke my muse or get my blood flowing or mind working.)

I write for two hours with a short break after one hour. I get up and stretch, maybe use the restroom, drink water, and do a little breathing or movement. Then, in less than five minutes, I'm back at it.

When I'm done with my two-hour writing block, I take another break. I then either continue working on my book project or switch to another type of writing, like blog posts.

Only when my writing is done for the day do I turn to other sorts of tasks. And if I don't follow this daily writing regimen, the writing inevitably does not get done.

It's no wonder. High-performance studies show that people who put their own creative projects first—and work on them as soon as they get to their desks—are more productive than those who don't. (If you aren't sure about your level of productivity, [take this quiz.](#))

That's why I want to challenge you to start your writing day off on the right foot . . . by writing.

Create a Morning Writing Routine

To complete this challenge, create a morning routine that includes writing before you get involved in any other “to-do” items for the day.

Does that mean you must write immediately upon waking up? Not necessarily.

You can choose to take on Hal Elrod’s morning routine, as described in *The Miracle Morning*, and get up and meditate, repeat affirmations, read, exercise, and journal. But right after that, turn to your project and write!

You can decide to have your morning routine include completing morning pages first, as recommended in Julia Cameron’s *The Artist’s Way*. Morning pages are three pages of longhand, stream of consciousness writing, completed first thing in the morning. But immediately afterward, work on your manuscript.

Even better . . . wake up and wander bleary-eyed to your desk, turn on the computer, and write for a designated period of time.

I will admit that, once in a while, I try to add more to my daily writing routine. For instance, I might light a candle or do a bit of journaling. I might get out my planner and review my day, offer gratitude, and think about what I’m excited about. This works if I keep the time spent on this to a minimum, like 30 minutes tops. But I do not find that it enhances my writing productivity. So, usually, I do this after I write.

If I feel the desire for more of a ritual—which sometimes I do—I participate in a pre-writing mini-morning routine, which involves taking a deep breath to get grounded in the moment, setting an intention—like “I intend to complete one section of chapter 8 and to make a positive and meaningful difference with my words as a result of writing this book,” and putting on some music that helps me focus. I also set a 55-minute timer. (I use the Focus at Will app on my computer for this.) Then, I write until my first break. After that, I set the timer again for 55 minutes and write until it rings.

Once I’ve completed my writing session for the day, I take on the rest of my morning routine—review my schedule (which I planned the night before), journal, meditate/visualize, recite affirmations, and eat breakfast. Then I get on with my other responsibilities and plans, which can include more writing. If I falter from this routine, my productivity plummets.

Make Writing Your Priority

To consistently write first means you must make writing your priority. Write in the morning before you do anything else that feel pressing or important.

If that means you have to get up at 5 a.m. so you have time to write before you go to work, handle the kids, walk the dog, or take care of your elderly parent, so be it. Just write first.

And definitely . . . definitely . . . don't get on social media or look at your email first. That's a sure way to get caught up in other people's agendas rather than your own.

Your agenda is clear and simple: Write first. Do everything else later.

Stop Letting Busy Work Get in the Way of Your Life's Work

By: Nina Amir

Do you feel as if the busy work you do on a day-to-day basis prevents you from your life's work—writing? Again . . . I understand.

Really. I do.

There's so much to do each day—and I don't mean laundry, cooking, cleaning, driving, taking care of children or pets, scheduling appointments, or paying the bills. Writers, especially aspiring authors, have an enormous list of tasks they need to accomplish each week. And most of them have little to do with writing.

- These non-writing tasks include such things as:
- Posting on social media
- Maintaining a website
- Seeking out speaking engagements
- Building a mailing list
- Promoting book(s)
- Creating graphics to accompany social media or blog posts
- Contacting editors and designers
- Replying to social media mentions
- Reading competing works or new releases in your niche

Each one of these tasks helps your writing career, but it can become busy work that takes you away from your life's work.

To make sure you get to your life's work—writing articles, blog posts, and books, focus on one thing: *PQO*.

PQO is a term coined by [Brendon Burchard](#) that stands for Productive Quality Output. If you are a writer, it's likely your PQO, like mine, is writing. Yet, it's easy for your writing to take a back seat to those other tasks and responsibilities.

For a few years, I primarily focused on income-producing activities, like creating and offering courses and coaching programs related to my books. However, that meant I didn't traditionally publish a book, which negatively affected my income.

When I thought back to the years when I released at least two books—one traditionally and one independently, I realized the positive impact doing so had on my income. I gained more coaching clients and had more people enroll in my courses—not to mention that I received an advance for the traditionally published book and, later, royalties for books. Plus, I was focused on productive outputs that mattered to me—and to my audience: producing books. I was happier, felt more fulfilled, and was moving toward my goals as an author.

That got me thinking . . . hard . . . about where I focus my time and energy. Yes, I need to make money, but I also need to focus on my life's work. That's a legacy I leave for others and how I fulfill my potential and purpose. And, focusing on what matters most to me—the writing—can help me become financially successful as well.

Determine Your PQO

As a [Certified High Performance Coach](#)®, when one my clients wants to focus on increasing productivity and consistent progress on a project, I ask an important question: *What are the productive outputs that matter most to you or in your field, industry, or career?*

Think about the eminent writers in your subject area. What makes them successful, in large part, is that they produce an enormous amount of published work. They are prolific and productive.

High-performing writers churn out more high-quality written work than their peers, and they do this consistently over the long term. In his best-selling book, *High Performance Habits*, Burchard writes, “. . . that is how they become more effective, better known, and more remembered. They aim their attention and content efforts toward PQO and minimize any distractions (including opportunities) that would steal them away from their craft.”

Are you consistently producing quality outputs that matter?

If not, you might not have identified your PQO. And while you might determine that it is, indeed, writing, go one step further and determine specifically what type of writing.

As a nonfiction writer, PQO might mean writing more articles, producing more book manuscripts, or creating better blog content more frequently and consistently. Only you know your PQO, and, if it's not clear to you right now what output is most meaningful to you, spend time getting [clarity](#). Then decide, and focus on that PQO.

How to Progress Your Career

Discovering your PQO can cause a turning point in your career. You'll have more success—more publishing deals, more readers, and more income. And you'll feel more focused and fulfilled. You'll also write more consistently.

Burchard writes, “Figuring out what you are supposed to produce and learning the priorities in the creation, quality, and frequency of that output is one of the greatest breakthroughs you can have in your career.”

I know you want to create written work that matters. So, do I! Nonfiction writers have a strong desire to produce work that is worthwhile, contributes, and makes a positive and meaningful difference.

That means spending more of your time and effort on writing. Burchard recommends spending 60 percent of your workweek on PQO. The other 40 percent should be spent on things that support your career as a writer—your life's work.

How much do you spend on PQO right now?

Probably, not enough.

How to Ensure You Do Your Life's Work

So how do you make sure your life's work—your writing—comes first? How do you focus primarily on your writing and write consistently? As I recommended in the last chapter, write first.

My PQO is definitely writing—primarily books, blogs, and articles. Secondary to that, it's training (speaking) and coaching, both of which support my writing. I want to

make a difference with my published work, and I'd also like to write and publish more frequently and consistently.

But I've struggled. Busy work has—and often continues—to get in the way of my life's work. However, I've done one thing that has increased the percentage of time I spend on PQO—specifically writing. I write first thing in the morning five days per week.

If I could encourage you one more time to do one thing, it would be that—get up in the morning and go straight to your computer and begin writing something that matters to you.

If you have a morning routine, fine. Schedule writing right afterward—recall the advice to place a tiny habit right after an already established habit. Please don't tell me, though, that you have no time to write. If you can fit in a morning routine, you can fit in writing (if it truly is important to you). Or make your morning routine writing.

Schedule Your Life's Work

If you think you'll get to your life's work . . . eventually . . . when you have time, life slows down, the kids are out of the house, or you don't have a day job, think again. It won't happen.

Stop making excuses and putting off doing what really matters to you. Instead, get a planner (more on this in the next chapter) or scheduling app—and use it to schedule daily writing time! I use a the Ical or Google calendar as well as a physical planner, like the *Panda Planner*, *Full Focus Planner*, *High Performance Planner*, or *The Mastery Journal*. You can use a simple calendar-type planner that you pick up at your local pharmacy.

Every day, block time in your schedule to write. For instance, you might schedule from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. Make this an appointment with yourself, and treat it like a doctor's appointment, which you would not cancel at the last minute or not show up for.

None of us know how much time we have left to complete our life's work. Therefore, it behooves you to get out of the habit of prioritizing busy work and to begin focusing on PQO daily. That's how you ensure that you make a difference and achieve your purpose and potential.

Use a Planner to Develop a Daily Writing Habit

By: Nina Amir

How do you approach your writing? Do you write when inspired, have time, are on a deadline, or on a set daily schedule? The [highest performing writers](#)—those who are consistently productive, accomplish their goals, and make a difference with their work—plan to write daily. And the success tool they use most often is a planner.

A regular old calendar will do the job, but a planner takes this task to the next level, thus increasing the chances of succeeding at whatever you take on—including a daily writing practice. In addition to merely putting tasks on a calendar, a planner may include prompts for setting goals and deadlines, focusing on gratitude, identifying problems and solutions, and being introspective about your growth as well as proactive about your days. Plus, most planners also include monthly, weekly, and daily scheduling and planning pages.

Incorporating a Planner

When I became a Certified High Performance Coach, I quickly realized my online calendar was not enough to get me from where I was to where I wanted to go. I had set my sights on achieving many things and leveling up my success in all areas of my life, but I still wasn't writing daily. Nor was I as productive as I would have liked. The calendar had served me well, but it wasn't going to get me where I wanted to go. I needed more.

My coach gave me a one-page planner that asked me to define my top three projects and the tasks necessary to complete them, the tasks I would complete that day, and the people I needed to reach out to for whatever reason. I used it for a while, and the document helped me keep the big picture of my projects in mind and determine what tasks I would complete that day.

But I wanted more. Specifically, I wanted a way to take my projects and related tasks and schedule them throughout the day. In other words, I wanted to use a planner in conjunction with a calendar.

So, I got a planner that included daily, weekly, and monthly planning including some thoughtful journal prompts. Having an organized way to look at my goals and to schedule implementation of specific tasks necessary to achieve them proved a game changer for me. It improved my overall performance—work, health/fitness, personal, and relationships. Plus, I found it easier to block time for writing and to show up daily and make headway on my work in progress when I planned out more than one day at a time.

I became hooked on intentional and consistent daily, weekly, monthly planning. And the clarity I gained in the process on my priorities—like writing—helped me block time daily to move my work in progress forward. Over time, I began writing daily on a more consistent basis—and becoming more productive.

Daily Writing Achieves Annual Writing Goals

I recommend that writers go through an annual planning process each December or early in January. They identify their goals for the coming year and break them into monthly goals. The monthly goals are then chunked down further as they plan each week's goals, every one of them leading to achievement of the larger goal. Then, the goal for the week is turned into daily goals. I believe this to be an essential success practice—especially daily planning.

It also is important to revisit your goals and plans more frequently. That's where quarterly, monthly, and weekly planning pages become helpful.

The key, however, is to make time in your schedule to work on those yearly, quarterly, monthly, weekly, and daily goals—one of which should involve writing at a scheduled time on a daily basis.

Consistent daily planning impacts your results every day as well as your ability to establish a consistent writing practice. You'll be much more productive because you are clear about what priority actions you need to take each day. You will know where to focus your attention, and, therefore, you will get more done. Of course, when you

prioritize writing by blocking time in your planner daily for this activity, you will develop a daily writing habit quickly.

On the days when I fail to do my planning, I accomplish much less. Without the plan, I'm unproductive and allow life to get in the way, and I often end up focused on what seems like a priority at the moment to the detriment of my writing projects.

The Right Planner for You

The easiest way to develop a daily writing habit is by using a planner—not just a calendar. I've tried a variety of planners, such as the *Panda Planner*, *The Freedom Journal*, *The Mastery Journal*, *The Passion Planner*, *The High Performance Planner*, and *The Full Focus Planner*. Every one of them is good. I still switch them up based on my needs. For instance, *The Freedom Journal* is a fabulous choice if you want to accomplish a writing goal in 100 days; you could even use it to develop a writing habit in that amount of time. If you want to incorporate your goal setting into a planner, try *The Full Focus Planner*. Or, if you want some thoughtful journal-type prompts, try *The High Performance Planner* or the *Panda Planner*. You will have to try them out to determine which one works best for you.

Using a planner will help you develop an organization and structure to your days, weeks, and months that, in the end, gives you the ability to write daily, if you want. You see, the more effective you are, the more freedom you have to do other things. While you want to develop and maintain a consistent writing practice, you also want and need to take time off periodically. Your planner helps you do so without disrupting your writing habit.

I am hooked on the daily planning process and know it makes a massive difference in my ability to succeed as a writer as well as in all areas of my life. Here's what I can tell you after my own trial periods with all these planners:

1. Choosing the right planner is an individual endeavor; everyone is different and has different needs.
2. Each planner offers you the opportunity to focus and gain clarity on what you want to accomplish and what you need to do to achieve your goals.
3. By using a planner, you increase your performance in all areas of your life.

4. Planners can be simple and still work well.
5. Planning daily writing blocks helps you develop a daily writing habit.

I also know for sure that consistent use of a planner helps me succeed. It will help you succeed, too, which is why I suggest you use a planner for at least 90 days. Most of them cover a three-month or six-month period. Use one until you run out of pages, and it is more likely to support development of a daily writing habit.

How I Use My Planner

Go out and purchase or download a planner, and then develop your own planning process. I like to plan the next day when I end work. Before I shut down my computer, I look at my online calendar and make a note of what appointments I have set. I add this to my planner's schedule section. (I usually add all my appointments for the week at one time, but sometimes new appointments come up.) I then plan my projects and priorities around the appointments.

However, with few exceptions (like when a client has no other time to meet with me other than 8 a.m.), I block out time for writing first thing in the morning. The rest of the day, my schedule can include anything from writing blog posts to making phone calls to checking email to working out. I might add a time block for a walk, making dinner, or calling my mother. I also check off what I accomplished that day. Anything left undone gets moved to the next day.

After I schedule my next day on the calendar in my planner, I complete any journal prompts related to the end of the day. For instance, my journal might ask me what I learned that day or what I could have done better. (The prompts are included in whatever journal I'm using. I do not make up my own.) I also list the tasks I must complete and make any other notes to help me stay on track.

The next morning, I review my calendar and recheck my priorities for the day. (These are likely three to five items on my to-do list.) I make sure I have blocked time on the calendar to focus on each one of these priority items. I then fill out whatever morning prompts are in the journal I'm using, such as what I'm grateful for or excited about. I check my planner periodically during the day to ensure I stay "on task," focused, and effective.

Yes, this seems super structured, but it works and, as I said, gives me more freedom (schedule in free time)! Try it for three months and see if you don't find yourself more productive and, therefore, more able to manage all areas of your life—including writing. Specifically, notice how much writing you get done and if you are able to write daily.

Your planning process does not need to be like mine. Whatever you do, though, be sure as you plan each day that you schedule a block of time for writing. Then watch how much easier it becomes to develop your daily writing habit.

How to Use Your Planner Effectively

Your planner should provide you with a place to schedule your time so you can block time for writing and other activities. For instance, it might offer you time slots to fill starting at 6 a.m. and ending at 9 p.m. Use this feature to schedule your daily writing appointments. Block out a section of the schedule, like from 7 a.m. until 9 a.m. every day, for writing. Consider that block of time sacred.

Plan an entire month or week at a time. If you plan day by day, you are likely to look at your schedule and decide are too busy that day to write. Place writing on your schedule first. Plan everything else around that one activity.

To use your planner effectively:

1. Make daily writing appointments with yourself. Do this on a monthly or weekly basis.
2. Write the appointments down in your planner's scheduling section. If you aren't using a planner, write them on your calendar or add them to a scheduling app.
3. Show up for your writing appointment on time and ready to write.
4. Don't leave your writing appointment until you've been at your desk the entire time allotted or you've met a specific goal, such as a daily word-count quota (see earlier chapter for information on word-count quotas).
5. At the end of the day or work period, review your plan for the next day. You also can do this first thing in the morning.

Using a planner and scheduling your writing blocks may seem simplistic. Indeed, you might think of it as common practice, but [common practice is not always common knowledge](#).

Many of the writers I work with do not use calendars . . . for anything! They leave all their tasks and appointments to memory. It's no wonder they don't show up consistently to write and have days that "get away from them" due to unexpected, unplanned, and forgotten tasks and meetings.

Using a planner is easy and prevents those types of challenges. Just schedule your writing appointments in advance, and then look at the calendar to remind yourself of your schedule.

When it's all said and done, a planner is the success tool you need to become a [high-performance writer](#). Whatever behavior, habits, mindsets, or dreams you want to create—including the ability to write consistently day in and day out, a planner will help you move toward those goals. In the process, you'll find yourself stepping into a better version of yourself—one with a greater ability to succeed as a writer.

Develop the Energy to Write Consistently

By: Nina Amir

Energy. Few writing teachers or book coaches speak about how your physiology affects your ability to write consistently or at all. In fact, energy affects every aspect of your success as a writer. Never is this truer than when you have a deadline looming over your head.

Consider the deadline created by deciding to participate in a 30-day writing challenge. Many writers who decide to start and finish a book in 30 days begin strong and steadily lose steam as the month goes on. The same is true of writing a book over a longer period of time—even a year. Lots of writers start out strong and then find their energy wanes and with it their motivation and creativity.

But that doesn't have to happen to you . . . not if you pay attention to your energy and do everything possible to keep it high and positive as you write.

Three Types of Energy That Affect Your Writing

Three types of energy affect your ability to write productively. They are:

1. Emotional Energy
2. Mental Energy
3. Physical Energy

Let's look at each one individually. Keep in mind, however, that each type of energy has an impact on the other. For example, if your emotional energy is low or negative, your physical energy and mental energy follow suit. If your physical energy is high, your emotional and mental energy will rise as well, and you will feel more positive, clear, and focused.

The slogan used by the New England Council, which has often been attributed to John F. Kennedy, applies here: "A rising tide lifts all the boats."

Emotional Energy

Your emotions impact your energy in many ways. If you feel sad, depressed, angry, or worried, your physical energy decreases. The stronger the negative emotions, the less physical and mental energy you have at your disposal to write.

Think about it . . . If you just broke up with your boyfriend, got scolded at work, or are wondering how to pay your bills, how do you feel? If you sit down to write feeling that way, you bring low and negative energy to your writing block. As a result, you feel tired, negative, and unfocused during that period, and you won't write productively because of your energetic state.

When you increase your emotional energy by consciously bringing joy and enthusiasm to your work, you become much more effective during writing periods. Additionally, if you can switch from negativity to positivity, you'll be more creative and productive.

You can change your emotional state quickly by changing your physical state. Try exercising or getting out in nature, for instance. Pet your dog or cat, or stand at your desk instead of sitting.

Although a bit harder, you can alter your emotional energy by altering your thoughts. Focus on something that makes you feel good, and notice how your emotional (and physical) energy changes for the better.

Mental Energy

Behind every emotion lies a thought. Indeed, your thoughts give birth to your emotions—and emotional energy. Therefore, if you want to increase your energy, first, change your thoughts.

Plus, when you dwell on the “constructive” criticism your editor gave you or the rejection you received from a publisher, your mental energy becomes depleted. Your mind is busy focusing on negative thoughts, which leave little mental energy for writing. As a result, you get distracted, lethargic, sleepy, and lackluster, and don't feel like writing.

To increase your emotional and physical energy, focus your thoughts—your mind—on the new agent you just landed, the paycheck you received for an article you wrote, or the positive feedback your blog readers gave you recently. Think about your favorite vacation spot or how happy you felt during dinner with your friend or spouse. When you do so, your emotions and your energy change for the better. Plus, those negative thoughts, which want to repeat themselves many, many times per day, come less often, allowing you to think about your work in progress.

Transforming habitual thought patterns can be tough, though. You've trained your mind to tell you over and over again how *you have nothing to write about, no one will want to read your work, you don't write well, and you will be judged on the message you've shared*. Now you have to change those thoughts to *I have something important to say, people will want to read my work, I am a good writer, and I'll be applauded for my message*.

How do you break these negative mental patterns? Begin journaling and notice when your mind takes you somewhere negative—and your emotions and energy follow suit. Pay attention to your self-talk and speech. What negative things do you tell yourself daily? And how do you feel when you say those things to yourself?

Try using affirmations, positive statements that replace your negative thoughts. But don't just write them. Say them to yourself as declarations—with emotion and energy. Try doing this in front of a mirror for more impact.

You also can pick an anthem for yourself. Sing a song with a happy and positive message!

Meditation helps, too. Let the negative thoughts go. Mentally speak to yourself in a positive manner, and visualize the future you desire.

Physical Energy

Underlying everything you do—including writing—is the need for physical energy. If you aren't rested, hydrated, and healthy, it's difficult to do anything, including write. That's why you must take care of yourself—even when a deadline makes it tough to take time away from your writing work.

What follows are necessities for optimal physical energy. Each one impacts your emotional and mental energy as well.

- Sleep enough—seven to eight hours per day.
- Eat three healthy meals per day.
- Eat healthy snacks.
- Drink a lot of water.
- Take 10 to 20 deep breaths every hour.
- Take frequent breaks—every 60 to 90 minutes.
- Rest your eyes and mind with meditation.
- Exercise—even if it’s just a 30-minute walk each day.

Give your body what it needs to function at an optimal level. If you provide your brain with the oxygen and water it needs, you’ll be more focused, clear, productive, and creative. If you care for your body by consistently sleeping enough and eating well, you’ll be able to work for extended periods without feeling tired or having difficulty thinking. And if you move your body often and regularly, you’ll be happier as well as healthier. In fact, exercise has been proven to change your mood.

Movement can work as a meditation as well—think “walking meditation.” As you move, you lose the negative thoughts and generate more positive ones, which improves your mental and emotional energy. That means you’ll come to your desk feeling strong and able to tackle your writing project.

What Type of Energy Impacts Your Writing?

What type of energy do you think impacts your writing most often? Keep track on a daily basis. Then put some new energy habits in place to help you combat your energy dips. For instance, you can:

- Take work breaks every hour.
- Increase your intake of water; drink half a glass or more during each break you take.
- Exercise daily—even if it is just for 15 minutes or some squats and sit-ups during your breaks.

- Sleep seven to eight hours per night minimum.
- Nap or meditate when you don't feel rested.
- Meditate—even if it's for two minutes—before you begin to write.
- Journal—get those negative thoughts and worries out of your head and onto paper.
- Create an affirmation practice.
- Develop energy raising triggers, like listening to a positive song before you begin to write.

There are so many ways to manage your emotional, mental, and physical energy. Choose a few! Anything you do to increase your energy impacts your writing in positive ways. And when you feel good about your writing, you're more likely to make time every day to write.

How to Make Daily Writing a Necessity

By: Nina Amir

The most significant challenge writers face is learning to write consistently. All too many say they want to write daily but instead do so sporadically, if at all.

I bet you understand—unless you are one of the few who sits down at the computer every day at the same time and knocks out a specific number of words or manuscript pages. You write consistently. You have a writing habit.

If you don't have a writing habit, here's the truth: You can write consistently. You can develop the habit of writing daily. Even with all the tips and advice you've received in the pages of this book, ultimately, you need just one thing to do so.

Necessity.

Raise Your Necessity

Writers who don't write consistently don't feel the necessity to do so. It's that simple.

Necessity is defined most-often as something required or indispensable. Simply said, it's something that *must happen*. That's why so many productive writers say they *must* write.

In the world of high performance, necessity—or raising the level of necessity—is seen as a habit. The most productive people in the world do whatever they can to increase their level of necessity, and this helps them get more done promptly and effectively.

The Four Factors of Necessity

In his bestseller *High Performance Habits*, Burchard identifies the factors that related to performance necessity. He calls them the “Four Forces of Necessity.” They are:

1. Identity

2. Obsession

3. Duty

4. Urgency

Let's break each one down so you can see how developing this "force" will help you write consistently.

1. Identity

When you say you are a writer, you tie your identity to the activity of writing. Therefore, consistently not writing affects your feelings about yourself and who you believe you are.

When you don't write, you feel incongruent with your identity. You probably feel frustrated, disappointed in yourself, or like a failure. You know you aren't performing up to your standards or fulfilling your potential or purpose as a writer. You aren't behaving like a writer—the person you want or know you can be.

To step into that role and to relieve your negative thoughts and feelings about yourself, you must write. It becomes necessary to write consistently. As you do, you become a writer, and you feel congruent with your identity.

2. Obsession

Are you one of those people who can't stop talking about the topic of your book or blog? Do you research and study your subject every chance you get? Do people often say you are "obsessed" with that topic?

Good!

High-performing writers are curious and have a strong desire to master their field of interest. They find their topic and writing project enjoyable, exciting, and personally satisfying. They are more than passionate about their subject area or projects; they are obsessed with them.

And guess what? Your obsession becomes part of your identity. Because you value it so highly, it becomes part of you. Not only that, since it feeds your mind and spirit, it becomes necessary.

Therefore, if you are obsessed with your writing project, you find it necessary to work on it consistently.

3. Duty

For whom are you writing this book? Not for yourself. You are writing it for someone—maybe your children or a particular group of people, for instance. You feel an internal push to leave a legacy, make a difference, inspire, motivate, or help, right?

Nonfiction writers are more often than not what I call “authors of change.” You want to make a positive and meaningful difference in your readers’ lives and do so with your writing projects.

Congratulations!

But your sense of duty must be strong enough to get you to sit down and write each day. How do you raise your necessity level so you write daily? Consider the people who *will not* be impacted positively by your words if you never write and publish your work. That’s right . . . the people who will NOT receive the benefit of reading your book if you never write it and give them a chance to read it.

Of course, not writing the book impacts you as well; you won’t become an author. However, not writing the book impacts your potential readers as well. While you may have the desire and passion to produce the book—and to become an author, your audience consists of people who *need* to receive the wisdom and information you can offer.

Think about them each time you want to increase your sense of necessity.

4. Urgency

Is there a fire burning under your butt to complete your writing project? Do you feel as if you must get this book written now?

If so, you’ve got urgency, and that will get you to the computer at 4 a.m. or find you writing at 1 a.m. Urgency will keep you writing for hours rather than for an hour.

If you don’t have urgency, set some deadlines. And don’t be kind about them. Push yourself—create a challenge to finish sooner rather than later.

Remember: Your potential readers are waiting. Every day that passes is one more when they do not have the information, tools, strategies, tips, motivation, or inspiration you (through your writing) can provide. They need your book today, not in two or three years. Keeping that in mind will generate the urgency you need to write every day.

Still not feeling a sense of urgency? Consider what would happen if you became unable to write the book . . . you developed crippling arthritis in your hands or, God forbid, died? Then, your audience would never get a chance to read your book.

High-performing writers live with a sense of urgency that keeps them moving forward. So, set a deadline or live with the sense that all you have it today. That mindset will help you write daily and get your book into readers' hands.

How to Increase Your Writing Necessity

To begin writing more consistently, increase your level of necessity. That's it.

How? In addition to what I've mentioned above, follow these four steps:

1. Adopt a “writer” identity.

Decide that you are a writer, and then act like one. Set new standards for yourself, self-monitor your daily writing activity, and get comfortable with taking a hard look at your performance—and making necessary changes, so you write daily. Expect more of yourself. Expect yourself to write every day, and don't let yourself off the hook when it comes to meeting those expectations.

2. Get obsessed.

Find a topic to write about that sparks your interest. Then dork out on it! Research. Read. Take classes. Talk to experts. Master your topic. And as you learn, share! Write.

3. Fulfill your duty.

Focus on being of service to your readers. Tap into your sense of purpose—in your life and as a writer. If you feel writing is your calling, heed it. If you think a particular book project is your mission, fulfill it. Write for your readers.

4. Feel the urgency.

Remember that your readers are waiting for your book, and you never know what could happen tomorrow. Set deadlines—not wishy-washy-maybe-I'll-meet-it deadlines. Set drop-dead-meet-it-or-else deadlines. And work toward those writing deadline daily.

Do those four things and your level of necessity will skyrocket. As a result, you will find yourself writing consistently.

How to Push Yourself to Write Consistently

By: Nina Amir

If you have struggled to develop a daily writing practice even though you have a high degree of necessity, you probably lack one thing—a sense of urgency. You need the habit of creating a sense of increased urgency before writing daily becomes habitual.

Think about it . . . If you've participated in a book-in-a-month event, like the [Write Nonfiction in November Challenge \(WNEIN\)](#), you were probably highly productive and found it much easier to write daily during those 30 days. Why? Participation in the event increased your sense of urgency. Your mind shifted to “I must get this done now . . . this month . . . not later!”

Of course, any deadline provides urgency—a contract with a publication that says your article is due tomorrow, a set blogging schedule that dictates you publish a post on a specific day and specific time each week, or a word-count goal that you promised to yourself before you leave for vacation. When your mind switches into that gear, it commits to the task at hand—finishing the work quickly, effectively, and on time.

Urgency Provides the Push

With a mindset trained on urgency, as well as necessity, and behaviors that support it—like writing consistently with focus and single-minded attention, you find yourself at the computer every day with fingers flying across the keyboard. Urgency pushes you to produce word after word as quickly as possible. It reminds you to write every day.

Writing becomes THE priority.

Urgency also drives you to track your progress. “Did you produce enough words today?” it asks you. “Are you on track to finish on time?”

If you aren't moving forward at a speed that ensures success, your mind pushes you to write more and write faster. The closer you get to the deadline, the more pressure you feel to declare, “Done!”

As a result, your focus increases. Your energy goes up. And your productivity skyrockets.

What Happens without Urgency

If your mindset isn't dialed into urgency, though, you may start strong and then stall out long before you develop a daily writing habit. The urgency initially pushes you to write, but when the project begins feeling tough, you find yourself pressed for time, or "life gets in the way." That's when you slow down and, eventually, stall out.

Your sense of urgency dissipates, and your mind tells you there's no rush. Commitment lessens every day, and before you know it, you've thrown up your hands and said, "Well, that's not gonna happen. I won't be writing daily."

As a result, you never develop the habit of urgency, which helps you write consistently every day.

5 Ways to Keep Your Urgency High

As a [Certified High Performance Coach](#)®, I know that urgency can become a habit. If you develop this habit, you consistently feel the internal push to write effectively.

Personally, I feel that urgency fuels my daily writing practice more than necessity. I can know I need to write—to get a book proposal to my agent or to complete a manuscript and send it to an editor, but knowing I need to get it done by tomorrow or next week . . . well, that fact propels me into hyper focus and productivity. I feel as if I have no choice but to write right now. The blinders go on, and all I do is write. Every. Single. Day.

In the moment when urgency kicks in, my sense of necessity skyrockets. *Now the need to write is time-bound.* And that makes all the difference.

How do you develop the urgency habit? Here are five ways to keep your sense of urgency high and your mind focused on writing daily:

1. **Keep the deadline in mind.** Remind yourself daily of the deadline you've set or been given. And if a due date that is 20 or 30 days away doesn't keep you writing fast, set smaller deadlines. For example, you might set a goal to

complete 20,000 words in two weeks. Or you could set a deadline to finish two chapters each week or even 1,000 words per day. (A word-count quota is a mini deadline.) The constant deadline will help you write consistently, and, before long, you'll have a daily writing habit.

2. **Track your progress.** Create a tracking system for your writing progress. For example, you can track your daily or weekly word count. Give yourself a quota as mentioned earlier in this book, like 1,500 words per day, and then track if you meet that. (You can do that with a production schedule, also mentioned previously.) When you fall behind, urgency will kick in. Additionally, you can [track your productivity](#). Watch what happens when you realize you only have 30 minutes left in your scheduled writing time block and you still have 500 words to write. You'll write faster than you thought possible!
3. **Get accountability.** Sometimes you just need a bit of support, cheerleading or camaraderie. After all, writing is a solo activity. That's where accountability comes in. If you tell someone your goal of writing daily and ask them to check in to see how you are progressing toward it, you will feel accountable to them for your actions. Even better, find another writer with whom you can team up as accountability partners. Write together every day in person or virtually. (I write virtually with two other people two times per week.) That little extra pressure to do what you said goes a long way toward writing daily.
4. **Remember your readers.** Keep in mind the fact that your readers need your book. As long as you fiddle around and don't get it done and published, they are left in pain, without the answer they need, or sans the solution you have to offer. Let the fact that they are waiting for your book keep your level of urgency high.
5. **Recall your purpose.** Do you remember why you wanted to write or to write a specific book? Can you recall your mission or purpose, your emotional reason for starting the book in the first place? If not, you'll struggle to develop a habit of urgency. If, however, you remember your purpose and you

keep it forefront in your mind, it becomes your GPS. It will guide you back to writing . . . and writing productively . . . on a consistent basis.

Develop an Urgency Habit

While a writing event, like the WNFIN Challenge provides, a perfect time to develop the habit of urgency, that event eventually ends. Then, it's up to you to continue that habit.

Every day write as if you have a deadline hanging over your head. Find ways to continue increasing your focus and effectiveness so writing remains a priority.

If you continue the habitual behavior of raising your level of urgency, it will support consistent and productive writing all year long.

ONGOING STRATEGIES

How to Generate Enough Ideas to Keep You Writing Daily

By: Nina Amir

I bet, like most writers, you work on many different types of projects. For instance, you might write blog posts, articles, eBooks, books, reports, proposals, and workbooks. To complete these projects, you need a constant flow of writing ideas.

If you want to develop a daily or regular writing habit, you can't spend your writing time staring at a blank screen and wondering what to write. You want to have a plethora of ideas calling to you . . . *Come! Write me now!*

That's called inspiration! Those ideas will keep you motivated to write consistently.

Every one of your projects starts with an idea. That means you need a lot of ideas—especially if you want to write daily. Without ideas, you don't write, waste time, and feel discouraged. Before long, you will stop trying to write consistently.

You've probably got time blocked on your calendar to write, revise, and publish your work. Do you also plan time to brainstorm ideas? If not, it's time to start.

Brainstorming is a way of generating ideas by creating the opportunity to “dump” all the ideas out of your brain at once. One idea leads to another and another . . .

You want to develop enough ideas to get you through the year or at least enough for a month or two. (Then you can do another brainstorming session.) That way you have ideas to pursue every day.

Brainstorm 52 Ideas

I challenge you to brainstorm 52 new nonfiction writing ideas—one per week for the entire year—that you can pursue on a weekly basis all year long.

You've got 52 weeks in the year. With 52 ideas, you can complete one per week.

For instance, you can write a blog post a week. You can send out a query to a magazine every week or write an essay and submit it each week. You could create a PDF,

checklist, or resource sheet to provide as a gift to your readers—and do one of these per week or per month.

Obviously, you won't write a long book in a week. You could, however, write a short eBook in a week.

Or you could brainstorm the idea for a longer book and afterward brainstorm ideas for each chapter in that book. If your book will have 10 chapters, for example, you could then compose one chapter per week. You'd have the book written in 10 weeks, and then you could go on to your next inspiring idea.

How to Generate Writing Ideas

To generate the writing ideas for an entire year of weekly writing projects, follow these steps:

1. Get out a piece of paper or poster board or open a mind mapping program, like MindNode, Freemind, or Mindjet.
2. Start writing down subjects you might like to tackle.
3. For each subject, write down as many ideas as possible. (For example, if the subject is elephants, your ideas might be elephant rescue, what happened to the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey elephants, characteristics of elephants, elephant feet, mother/child elephant relationships, etc.) Let your mind go wild.
4. Prioritize your ideas or indicate which are the best or the ones about which you feel most excited.
5. Decide how to use the idea. (For example, as a blog post, an article, or an eBook.)
6. Get out a calendar.
7. Place your writing ideas on the calendar so you know what subject to write about on which day. Include details on the type of writing project you will tackle for this idea.
8. If you need more ideas to fill out the year, go back to step one and begin brainstorming again. Or plan another brainstorming session about one month before you run out of ideas.

And now you are ready to start writing! You won't be sans writing ideas for a year (or at least for a few months, depending upon how many ideas you generate from your first brainstorming session). You can conduct another brainstorming at any time.

Brainstorm on a Continual Basis

Make brainstorming a yearly, monthly, or quarterly exercise. Stay ahead at all times.

Or brainstorm specific types of ideas once per month, such as blog post or article ideas. You likely don't need more than a handful of book ideas at a time.

When you brainstorm on a continual basis, you'll never run out of ideas. And you will feel inspired to get to your computer and write every day, which makes it much easier to develop a writing habit.

Pay attention to what happens after your brainstorming session. It's likely more ideas will come to you right away or as time goes on. And the more often you brainstorm, the more quickly and easily writing ideas will come to you. You'll make idea generation a habit that will serve you well during your career as a writer and keep you writing daily.

How a Production Schedule Can Help You Develop a Writing Habit That Lasts

By: Mridu Khullar Relph

A novel I started and then put on the backburner but that I'm meaning to return to any day now. A non-fiction book project that got held up because I needed to do more research. Four article ideas I should really get around to pitching one of these days. A blog post I know will resonate so deeply with my readers but that I haven't yet begun writing. A personal essay that's in first draft form but needs polishing.

Projects, so many projects, that lie in states of half completion. All that I intend to finish any day now but just never get around to.

Sound familiar?

Here's the thing: Even if you're a prolific writer (and I am—I've written 240,000 words in the last six months in personal projects alone), you're only going to be able to tackle between two and 10 projects per year. Which means that you still have the difficult task of picking those few projects that are the most important, the most beneficial to your career, or the most potentially profitable, and then run with them.

Then you have to write them.

How to Create a Writing Habit That Sticks

A year-long production schedule goes beyond a simple word-count quota and helps complete the writing project (or projects) you plan to work on during the year. With a big-picture view of your writing year, you can pick the project to which you are going to commit for the next few weeks or months or even the entire year.

Then it's time to consider how long it will take to complete that first project.

Do you need a whole year to finish your nonfiction manuscript or can you get it done sooner? Perhaps it will take even longer. How are you to know?

This is where things become magical.

Because the best way I know to not only determine when you'll finish your project but also create a writing habit that you can actually stick to involves creating a *production schedule*.

How a Production Schedule Leads to a Daily Writing Habit

In business, a production schedule consists of a timeline that defines the tasks, milestones, assets, and budget involved in product creation. The production schedule for a written work (the *product*) most often revolves around deadlines and word counts, a bit like a word-count quota. However, you might have a production schedule that lists all the books you want to write this year (or for a longer period).

Now, I know what you're thinking, and let me address this right away. To the creative writer, "production schedule" sounds like a very business-like, no-nonsense term that grates like fingernails on a chalkboard. Calling a book a "product" is like someone calling an article "content." I don't like it.

Yet, I'm a firm believer in looking at your work as art when you're in the process of creation and a business when you're looking at it from a career standpoint. In that sense, think of yourself as a publisher who has books to ship. By doing so, you'll have the best of both worlds: the joy and satisfaction that comes from creating art, and the money, sales, and motivation that comes from running a business.

Just because a production schedule involves numbers and deadlines doesn't mean it has to be dry. Find beautiful and artistic calendars for your walls that you can color in when you meet your goal for the day. Or, if you're like me and you enjoy crossing things out, buy a moleskin and cross out word targets as you go along. The more fun and entertaining you make this, the more likely you are to stick with the process. Just remember to make it simple and not overly complicated.

How to Create a Production Schedule

Here's how to create a production schedule for a book manuscript that works.

1. **Figure out how many new words you can write in an hour.** We're talking new words and not rewriting. For me and most writers I know, this number is around 1,000.
2. **Now think about how many hours per week you have available that you can devote to writing new words.** Again, we're talking first draft—new words only. If you need to revise work, set aside a different time in your week to do that. You don't want to mix the writing part of your brain with the revising part, because that's what leads to five-year manuscripts. Trust me, I know. Let's say, for the sake of example, that this number is five hours. That is, you can devote one hour a day to writing new words while taking weekends off. This means you can write a minimum of 5,000 new words per week.
3. **What will be the total length of this work?** Sometimes this is hard to predict. Almost always, however, you'll have a rough idea. If you're writing a nonfiction book for writers that you intend to self-publish, you know it's more likely to be in the 30,000-word range rather than the 100,000-word range. Similarly, mainstream fiction will be 80,000 words, and romance novels will run a lot lower. Based on the scope and market of your project, how many words do you think your project is likely to run? For the purpose of this discussion, let's say that number is 60,000 words.
4. **Let's do some math now, shall we?** If your manuscript is 60,000 words and you're writing at a pace of 5,000 words per week, you easily can deduce that, if you work diligently, show up at the page each day, and write your 5,000 words for the week consistently, you will have a completed first draft in 12 weeks, or three months. If all your manuscripts are similar in length, you could easily finish four manuscripts by the end of the year, working only an hour a day. Not bad.
5. **Finally, pick a daily target, put aside everything else, and focus on hitting that day after day, consistently.** This target could be project-based, such as "one short story a week," or process-based, such as "1,000 words per day." It could even be time-oriented, such as "one hour each day." Choose what works for you, but make sure it helps you feel positive and

optimistic about coming to work every day. By focusing on the daily target and not the project as a whole, you make progress every day. Before you know it, you're typing the words "The End."

Once you know what your deadlines look like for each project that you've picked for the year, mark those big deadlines in your calendar. Break those big deadlines into smaller chunks if you can.

Where the Magic Happens

This is where production schedules prove to be so magical. They allow you to see, in black and white, how staying on track can get you to your goals. When you're feeling unmotivated and discouraged, look at your production schedule and see the date on the calendar for when you'll be finished if you stay on track.

For instance, with my book *Shut Up and Write: The No-Nonsense, No B.S. Guide to Getting Words on the Page*, my goal was to write a chapter a day, regardless of the word count. Some days, I wrote much more than that, but one chapter was my bare minimum. That was my daily deadline.

If you're working on a larger project, such as a novel, you could have deadlines for the 10k-word mark, the halfway mark, and so on. Mark each of those milestones on your calendar so that you know how on- or off-track you are as you move through the work.

If data and spreadsheets inspire you, as they do me, create some of those as well. Personally, I have a notebook that I use in which I've written down dates and word counts like this:

November 1 (Sunday): 1,000 words

November 2 (Monday): 1,000 words

November 3 (Tuesday): 1,000 words

Then, I cross out the word counts as I move forward. Sometimes, I'll work ahead. When that happens, I allow myself the flexibility of taking time off or giving myself leeway for when, undoubtedly, life gets in the way in the form of a sick child, a fried brain, or a car breakdown.

Moreover, if you're a freelancer or work in an industry that already drowns you in deadlines, you need to juggle so you don't end up with four work deadlines and a book

deadline in the same week. The week you're traveling abroad for work is not the week to schedule the start of a new book project. Having a production calendar helps you keep daily word counts in sync with the rest of your life.

Create Room in Your Schedule

No matter how you eventually publish your work, you'll have to create room in your day for dealing with pesky publication issues as well: edits, back cover copy, design, blogging, promotion, events, and so on. While you may be able to continue your writing during those times — and you should! — sometimes it's impossible to fit everything into a single day. Allowing for that helps keep self-loathing at bay.

My favorite reason for having a production schedule is that it keeps me from getting hung up on or too attached to one single book or project. The day after I finished my first novel—a feat that took five full years—I began work on a non-fiction book.

Now you, too, have a road map, a production schedule for a year, six months, or however long you've planned ahead. A road map that can tell you exactly what to work on and what lies ahead. A plan that shows you that if you commit to the work every single day, you will have a finished project in your hands — or three — by the end of the year.

And you'll have developed a consistent writing habit that lasts.

All you have to do now is show up and write.

2 Powerful Tools to Optimize Your Daily Writing Practice and Productivity

By: Carol Tice

Does it sometimes feel like it takes you forever to write a piece? Even if it's short?

We've all been there. The clock seems to spin like a top, while you struggle to find your writing mojo. It's like swimming through Jell-O, and at the end of the day, you're lucky to have a couple of sentences strung together.

That doesn't make you want to sit down and write the next day, does it?

If you'd like writing to get easier and more conducive to a writing habit, I've got two proven strategies you can use. Each one can help you become a more efficient writer, but you'll get best results using them both.

It's About Time

You've probably noticed that many animals live on a schedule. Owls are active at night. The deer come out at dawn to graze. Fish know when to swim upstream and mate.

These natural rhythms are known as [chronobiology](#)—the inborn clock that tells animals the best time to wake up, hunt, eat, sleep, mate.

People have that internal clock, too. The funny thing is, though, we're not all alike. Some of us are more productive at one time of day, some at others.

The trick is to discover your optimal chronobiology for creativity and productivity (as mentioned in the previous chapter), and then take advantage of your best times to write.

For me, I'm super-sharp and full of ideas anywhere from about 5:30 a.m. up until lunchtime. About 4 p.m., I seem to catch a second wind. Then, I can crank out writing quickly through until about 9 p.m.

In other words, I could write something in an hour flat around 6:30 a.m., let's say, or I could spend three hours slogging through it at 2 p.m. If I organize my day so my

writing block falls in one of my better times—instead of trying to force out some words during my slow time—productivity jumps.

Optimize Your Schedule

If you don't have a sense of when your most productive writing times are, start keeping a journal. Report what you tried to write and how easy or hard it was. Soon, you should see patterns in when writing is easy for you and when it's hard.

Some people write great after midnight, some at two in the afternoon. Find your sweet spot.

Then, rearrange your writing schedule to put your writing at your best creative times. Stop hitting Facebook, or responding to email, or taking client meetings in your prime writing time.

Shift other tasks to your less-useful blocks of time for writing.

Once your schedule is reorganized this way, your writing should flow easily and get done quickly. And you'll be more likely to develop a writing habit.

There's one more tweak you can make to your work schedule that'll make your writing productivity soar. This is how I've produced thousands of articles and blog posts for many years at a rate of three to four fully reported stories a week.

A Vacation Every Week

Ever wish you had more time off, but you feel you can't take time away?

Here's a tip: You can. I take at least one full day of deeply restful vacation each week. It's an ancient tradition that's never been more needed than it is today in our 24/7, always-online culture.

It's called the Sabbath. A day of rest. Perhaps you've heard of it?

For those of us in blogging or online business, a day off can be hard to find. You feel the need to quickly respond to comments or tweets. But I've proven you don't really have to, even though your online business is on all the time.

My About pages on my sites note that I'm always off on Saturdays. Get back to ya later!

I've never had a single complaint. Instead, people applaud my dedication to work/life balance.

How does a day off transform your productivity and help develop a writing habit? The secret is to make this day deeply restful, so you come roaring back and are super-productive.

Take It Off—All the Way Off

You get to choose how many days you write per week. If you write seven days per week, week after week, you're riding the burnout train. The longer you work without a break, *the less productive you become*. You're like a clock that's never being wound, slowly running down.

Perhaps you've noticed it's getting harder to keep writing daily? That's a sign you need to get a day off back into your life. Not now and then, but as a regular habit.

Workaholism is an epidemic in the online-writing world. But you *can* take your life back.

Often, writers *tell* me they take a day off. But when I ask for details, it turns out they're still checking email, Twitter, or their blog's comments and perhaps popping on to churn out a quick blog post.

That means you're not really resting your brain from your writing life. The trick is to truly leave it all behind.

I know, a lot of big gurus tell you to write every day. I say, try writing six days a week instead.

During my day off, all my devices are off. And it goes deeper than that.

On my day off, I don't *think* about work, make lists, or plan things I'll do when work resumes. I am mentally far away from my work life, engaged in entirely different activities—gardening, attending services, going for walks or bike rides, sharing time with family and friends.

During that day, I spend my time doing things that give me joy and allow me to return to my writing with fresh energy and new eyes.

It's scary when you first try this out, because you think you're not going to get all your work done. After all, it's always taken seven days to do it!

But what really happens is that you're so refreshed by the day off that your productivity soars. You get it all done in less time than it used to take.

Make Less Space, Get More Done

By taking a day and setting it aside as a “no work” day, you've removed a big block of time from your work life.

Have you ever noticed that work has a tendency to expand to fill all the available space you give it? I call this a Newtonian Law of Freelance Writing.

When you know you're going to be at the computer every day, all week, endlessly working, it's stressful. So, a lot of procrastination happens. Hey, I've got time to hit Longreads and find an inspiring long feature story to read or to poke around Facebook for an hour, right?

When you know you've got to finish by Friday so you can take your day off . . . well, then you tend to put your head down and write. Now, you're dangling a reward—free time! And that tends to motivate people.

Let me just say this: I don't know anyone who's started a practice of taking a day off who ever went back to working 24/7. Develop a habit of examining and optimizing your writing time, and you'll keep growing more productive—and you'll develop a habit of actually writing on the days you choose to write.

How to Write No Matter What Life Throws Your Way

By: Nina Amir

Do you write no matter what life throws your way? Most writers allow “life” to get in the way of their daily writing practice.

I’ve been there, done that. I bet you have, too.

Life, indeed, will get in the way if you let it. However, there are strategies and tools that will help you fit writing into your busy and sometimes unpredictable life.

Write Anywhere and Anytime

It is possible to write anywhere and anytime. I’ve worked on books and blog posts in coffee shops while waiting for my daughter to finish art class and on the bleachers while she attended swim team practice. I’ve written in dance studio lounges while my son took a ballet class or rehearsed for a performance and in doctor’s offices while waiting for one of my kids to get called in for an appointment. I’ve written on airplanes, in hotel rooms, and in the rehab when my elderly mother broke her hip. I’ve written in the treatment room while waiting for the acupuncturist and in my parked car while I waited for a friend to show up for a lunch date.

Maybe you’ve done the same.

Or maybe you didn’t write because you weren’t at home, didn’t have your computer, or were busy with other things. Possibly you were:

- Too tired
- Too overwhelmed
- Too stressed
- Too distracted
- Too low energy
- Too frustrated

- Too (fill in the blank)

To write no matter what, you have to know how to generate the energy and the focus to write anywhere and anytime. And even if you can or decide to write at home, you want the ability to do so first thing in the morning, after work, late at night—whenever you can fit in a writing session.

And you have to write despite the piled up laundry, the bills that need to get paid, the meals to cook, the kids to care for, your responsibilities, the carpool schedule, your full-time job, the housework . . . and on and on.

What Gets in the Way?

What gets in the way of writing? Make a list. What types of things happen in your life and get you off course?

At one point, I had four kids at home to care for and cater to. I've had to drive 1.5 hours in both directions (every day) to get a child to dance class. I've had to drop everything I'm doing to bring forgotten lunches and homework to school, which required a 30-minute drive in each direction. I've had sick kids trash my writing plans for the day. And I've had to travel cross country four times in two months to care for my mom.

I get it. Life happens.

These days I have a lot more time compared to when my children were young, but my schedule is full. I've got coaching clients, blog posts, articles, book proposals, manuscripts, classes, and family commitments.

Things still happen—like my mom needing to have a pacemaker installed surgically, falling off my bike and ending up with road rash all over my face and stitches in my upper lip, or my granddog showing up for a three-month visit. And once in a while, I get sick, or my husband gets sick and requires help.

And then there are the so-called “normal” days when it seems impossible to fit in writing. I've got clients to coach, promotions to run, social media to keep up with, and email . . . so much email . . . to wade through.

But it's not impossible. You and I can write no matter what life throws at us. We can write consistently—even daily.

To do so requires leveling up and mastering your physiology, psychology, and productivity. You also need to master your plan.

Master Your Physiology

I know . . . You're tired. You feel lethargic. You lack enthusiasm because you are overwhelmed and stressed. At the end of the day, you don't have the energy to write, especially if you have a full-time job and kids or responsibilities caring for elderly parents. Maybe you're also too tired to get up early in the morning to write. I get it . . . I do.

Maybe you have enough time, but when you sit down to write, you bring low energy to the computer. (Do you sit there slumped over and leaning back in the chair?) You can't be productive with low energy. You have to generate high and positive energy to write—even if you are tired.

Here are some tips that will help you generate the energy to write even when it seems like you can't:

- **Move.** Work out, walk, do yoga—anything that gets your blood circulating and your body moving.
- **Breathe.** Your body and mind need oxygen to work effectively. Take deep breaths!
- **Drink.** Not alcohol or caffeine. Drink a lot of water.
- **Sleep.** Your body and mind need seven to eight hours of sleep to operate at optimum levels.
- **Focus.** Remove distractions. Limit the number of decisions you make per day. Stay present.

Notice the energy you bring to your writing. Is it high, low, positive, or negative? (Remember we talked about the effects of energy on writing in a previous chapter?) Learn to manage your energy, and show up to the computer with high and positive energy.

The ability to manage your energy also helps you handle the ups and down of life.

Master Your Psychology

Life happens, but then do *you* happen? Do you react, rather than respond? Do you get upset, angry, frustrated, overwhelmed, or negative rather than asking yourself how best to respond to the situation?

Your reaction to what happens in life is not a decision but a conditioned and unconscious way of behaving in certain circumstances. Instead of reacting, master your psychology by consciously deciding how you want to respond. You can choose to be patient, compassionate, understanding, positive, focused, and effective, for example.

Also, you can master your psychology in the following ways:

- **Stop blaming.** No more saying *I can't write because I spend all my time at work . . . or caregiving my elderly parents . . . or watching the kids . . .*
- **Stop making excuses.** Yes, excuses, like *I'm too tired. I'm too busy. I don't know how. "X" happened, and now I can't write.*
- **Stop listening to your negative thoughts and limiting beliefs.** Thoughts like, *It's too hard. No one will read what I write. It's not worth it. I can't do it,* simply aren't true. So, stop lying to yourself. (Recall what I said about how thoughts affect your emotions and energy.)
- **Create or choose positive thoughts.** See how you feel (and notice the results you get) when you consistently think positive thoughts, like *I can find a way. I embrace the struggle. I can do this.*
- **Focus on what you want.** Don't focus on what you don't want.
- **Be on purpose.** If you know your purpose or mission, take daily steps to fulfill it. Let purpose be your GPS.
- **Know your priorities as a writer.** Is it to finish the manuscript, write daily, or traditionally publish? Know them, and put them first—not last.
- **Determine what constitutes a *necessity* in your life.** Hint: It's not TV or Facebook, or even reading a novel for pleasure. Take care of real needs, and put the other activities on a back burner.

- **Develop discipline.** You need will power and a firm commitment (from yourself) to do what you say—to write no matter what every day.

Control your mind. When you are in control of you, you govern when and if you write—not some outside circumstance, physical issue, or limiting belief.

Master Your Productivity

Productivity hinges on your psychology and physiology. It also hinges on your ability to stick to your commitments—to have the discipline to do what you say and to keep promises (to yourself and others).

Plus, to be productive, you must show up at the computer with a positive mindset, clarity about your work in progress, the ability to focus, and enough energy to write efficiently.

The following tips will help you master your productivity:

- **Schedule writing time.** You probably block out time for taking the kids to school, exercise, and even going to church. What about time to write? Have you made a writing appointment with yourself? Is it on your calendar daily? It should be.
- **Create in the morning.** Don't check your email or social media accounts first thing when you wake up. Instead, sit down to write. That way you won't get sucked into other people's agendas or time-wasting activities. You'll accomplish something important right away, and that will set the tone for the day.
- **Shut out distractions.** Send the kids out for a play date (or hire a sitter). Use noise-cancelling headphones when you write. Turn off the internet or any sites that make noise—including email. Shut the door to your office. Go somewhere quiet.
- **Have a writing plan.** Don't sit down and ask, *What will I write today?* Plan your writing periods. For example, on your calendar it might say, *Write the lead and first paragraph of the article for Field and Stream magazine,*

complete the first draft of the next three sections of chapter 2, or write and publish a blog post on how to prevent hacking.

And when life actually gets crazy, work in short time blocks. Don't even attempt to write for two hours per day. Instead, work for 15 minutes per day. That's doable. And that short time block often turns into 30 minutes or an hour. But even a quarter of an hour writing each day keeps your project fresh in your mind and gives you a sense of forward movement. (Or go back to a tiny habit, like 20 words per day.)

Master Your Plan

If you were an athlete, like a marathon runner, you'd have a plan for how to run the race. Part of that plan would include how to overcome the tough spots—like when you feel tired, physically drained, and unable to finish. You'd have planned what to do when your mind starts saying, *I can't do this. It's too hard*, or when your body rebels and gets a cramp.

It's no different with your writing. You need a plan to get you from “start” to “finish.” To continue with the marathon runner analogy, what will you do if you twist an ankle, the person running next to you needs help, or you see your child on the sidelines (not cheering you on but crying)?

How will you deal with the challenges life throws at you so you can continue writing until you complete the manuscript and get it published? How will you ensure that you continue to write . . . no matter what?

Sometimes Life Comes First

It's true . . . Sometimes you can't do your best work—or work at all—because of life. Some circumstances require your full attention and energy. Certain situations require that you make life—not writing—a priority.

In the marathon example, you might keep running despite the sprained ankle. However, you might stop to help the runner next to you who is struggling in some way. And you might stop to check on your child—or you might accept that your husband is there and can handle the situation until you cross the finish line.

When it comes to writing, it's a rare situation that doesn't allow you to take 15 minutes per day to write or five minutes to compose two sentences. And that's how you keep writing no matter what life throws at you.

When life happens, *you happen* and take control of your life and your writing.

5 Tactics to Help You Write Even When Life Threatens to Get in the Way

By: Nina Amir

You set a goal—write a book in 30 days, finish an article before Friday, publish a blog post every Wednesday. And you’ve been writing every day, cranking out the words and moving toward meeting your deadline. And then . . . BOOM! Life happens.

Your kids (or you) get sick. Someone close to you dies. A natural disaster occurs. The basement floods. Your boss throws a new project at you that is due ASAP. Your car breaks down.

And . . . you stop writing.

“Life Got in the Way.”

“Life got in the way.” That’s the most common explanation I hear from writers who want trying to write consistently for why they haven’t written consistently. But life doesn’t have to impede your writing progress.

It’s true that sometimes life makes writing enormously challenging. If a hurricane or wildfire pushes you out of your home, you might find it hard to sit down at the computer—at least for a day or two. But, if you have your computer, you can write. If you don’t have your computer, you can borrow one or buy a new one. (Insurance will even cover it!) Or you can go to a place where you can borrow a computer, like a library, and write. If you stored your writing project in a cloud-based service, you can access it and keep moving forward.

It’s true, you might feel distracted with life happening all around you. Yet, that doesn’t have to stop you from writing. Set a timer, and write—even for 15 minutes. The mini-deadline will help you focus.

Life Is Not an Excuse Not to Write

In most cases, though, whatever disaster or unexpected event has caused you to stop writing becomes an excuse for not pushing through to meet your goal. It's your way of getting out of doing something that can feel hard at any time. (And saying, "life got in the way" sounds a lot like "the dog ate my homework.")

I've been there.

Believe me, I know about life happening. Remember my mother and her broken hip? I still wrote.

When I was pregnant with my first child, a full-time freelance writing and editing job for a medical newsletter. She was born on a Saturday. The next week the newsletter needed to go to press, and there was no one but me to complete the work. When my daughter slept, I wrote or edited.

I've also had sick kids end up home for the day just when I'm on a deadline with a magazine or for a book contract. I wrote in between taking their temperature, cooking them chicken soup, and holding their heads over the toilet as they threw up. I even wrote while sitting with them in the doctor's office—and turned in my work on time.

You can write, too, no matter what life throws your way.

How to Write No Matter What

So, how do you do that? Try these five tactics to help you write no matter what.

1. **Make your writing project available from anywhere.** If you are writing in Microsoft Word or with a program like Scrivener, you might find it difficult to write if your computer, God forbid, was stolen or consumed in a fire. However, if your documents are stored in the cloud, like with a backup service, you can access them from anywhere and with any computer (as long as you know your password). For this reason, Google Docs provides an excellent platform for your writing. Or you can set Scrivener settings to save to Evernote or Dropbox. You can also manually save to a cloud service like Amazon S3 or pay for cloud backup service like Carbonite or Backblaze.
2. **Make writing a ritual.** Rituals are ceremonial things you do every day. In that way, they are a bit like habits. Often they provide a demarcation in time,

often so the next action feels intentional or sacred. If your house burned down in a fire, you would still brush your teeth, eat breakfast, and pray before going to bed, for instance. While you can think of these simply as habits, they also can be called rituals. For some, seeing the writing habit as a ritual makes developing it more enticing. Develop a writing ritual that involves starting your day (or ending it) with a journal or at your computer.

3. **Keep your writing time short.** Commit to writing daily—no matter what—even if it’s only for 15 minutes. By committing to writing for a short amount of time, you stay tapped into your project. You retain the continuity of the work, and you maintain your writing habit. Will you get as much done in that amount of time compared to writing for an hour? Probably not, but you’d be amazed at how many words or pages you can produce when under the pressure of time.
4. **Fit it in.** In keeping with #3, you can always find a place in your day to fit in a writing block—even a short one. You can write during a lunch break, before bed, or first thing in the morning. You can write on the bus or train during your commute or while your child is at gymnastics or taking a nap. If you are determined to write—no matter what—you can find a time and place to fit writing into your day.
5. **Schedule make-up days.** If you have ever lived somewhere cold and snowy, you might remember having school “make-up days.” At the end of the year, the school district would tack on days to make up for lost time due to snow days. Do the same with your writing project. Tack on make-up days to your end-of-the-month schedule, so you can make up lost time and meet your deadline.

When life threatens to get in the way, be armed to keep writing—no matter what. And let that preparation give you the confidence to consistently tackle your nonfiction writing project no matter what.

Don't Let Holidays and Vacations Kick Your Writing Habit to the Curb

By: Nina Amir

Holidays of all types can wreak havoc on a writer's schedule. Your kids are home from school, your husband doesn't go to work, and family members descend upon your home and sleep on the couch in your office. And then there is the cooking, cleaning, and entertaining that take up time.

Before you know it, those holidays have kicked your writing habit to the curb.

Holidays are fun, and it's always a good thing to take a day or two off to relax and rest so you come back to your desk feeling refreshed and inspired. But holidays don't help you continue to write consistently or daily.

So how the heck are you supposed to keep up your writing habit during imposed "vacations," like the end of the year when two holidays in a row can mean an entire week or more off work? How will you continue writing daily *if you want to do so*?

I can understand if you don't want to write during a holiday. After all, we all like a day off! But one day off can lead to another, quickly breaking the daily writing habit you worked so hard to develop.

You may want to write during a holiday for any number of reasons, but keeping your writing habit intact is probably the biggest one. Here are a few others:

- You have a deadline to meet.
- You enjoy your work.
- You feel passionate about your current work in progress.
- You set a goal to finish your project and know that taking time off will prevent you from accomplishing it.

Develop Holiday Habits and Strategies to Help You Write

If you do, indeed, want to keep writing before you watch the fireworks, while you wait for Santa, or as your family members count the days and hours until they can sing “Auld Lang Syne,” here are a variety of ways to accomplish that goal:

1. Get up early and write for an hour or two before your family members arise.
2. Stay up late and write after everyone in your home has gone to bed.
3. Escape to a coffee shop for an hour to write.
4. Take your computer with you when you run an errand and spend at least 30 minutes writing in your car before you complete your errand.
5. Excuse yourself from the festivities to “have some quiet time.” Take your computer or journal with you, and write as long as possible!
6. Hire a sitter to watch your children while you shut yourself in your office (or leave to write at a coffee shop for an hour).
7. Take a walk and speak your book, blog post, or article into your phone using a voice recognition system. Later, edit the transcript.
8. Ask your spouse to watch the kids or entertain the family for an hour while you write.
9. Inform your family that you are not on vacation—even if they are, go into your office, and close the door. Put a note on the door that says, “Do not enter or knock unless someone is bleeding or needs an ambulance.”
10. Shorten your writing periods. Instead of writing for an hour or more at a time, grab small writing periods where you can—15 minutes here, 10 minutes there—until you accrue an hour’s worth of writing time per day.

Holidays are a super important time to get out your planner or calendar and determine which days you will write and at what time. Block the time to write, and you are more likely to fulfill that commitment.

Holiday High-Performance Writing

Notice, I didn’t suggest that you sit your kids (or your husband) in front of the television set to occupy them while you write, although you could do that as well. I don’t want you to encourage anyone to pursue mindless or useless activities so you can achieve your goals.

However, It's amazing how much writing you can accomplish while your kids or family occupy themselves with an activity, such as playing a game, reading a book, or conversing. Maybe it won't be your best writing, but maybe it will. Writing in short spurts or under deadline can make you work more efficiently because it requires that you focus more intently on your task.

I'm not an advocate of never taking time off from your writing work. It's important to get a writing break from time to time—like the one-day Sabbath break mentioned previously. Nor do I advocate acting like a recluse when you could spend quality time with family and friends. I do, however, support following through on your intentions and doing what's necessary to meet your goal of developing—and continuing—writing habit. If that means developing alternative holiday writing routines, skills, or strategies, more power to you!

[High-performing writers](#) stay focused on their goals and have clarity of purpose and intention. They develop skills that allow them to achieve their highest potential no matter what else is going on in their lives. They don't let holidays—a part of life—get in the way.

On the other hand, often high performers do what's necessary to take time off. (Recall that structure and productivity lead to freedom.) They get super focused before the holidays roll around and employ a different type of high-performance writing skill: Get your work done beforehand!

For example, every time I get ready to take a vacation or holidays approach, I write all my blog posts and schedule them in advance. I don't just say, "Oh, well. I'm going on vacation. My readers will have to wait until I get back to read my next post." I don't rationalize that "I don't have to publish a post on a holiday. My readers won't mind if I miss a week."

When you know a one-day or a week-long holiday is fast approaching, get focused! And get productive. With your work completed, you don't have to worry about writing during the holiday—unless you find you have the time or can make the time . . . or want to. You can still employ any of the holiday writing tips mentioned above to get some writing in before you sip eggnog, go to the parade, or have that barbecue.

Here's another strategy: If you do plan to take 10 days for a summer vacation or the winter holidays, for example, commit to writing for at least 20 days during that month.

That's five days per week prior to your break, which is enough to keep your writing energy and habit going strong before—and, likely, after the holiday.

If that seems like a lot, ask yourself if writing is a hobby or a career. If it's a hobby, you are likely to write only when you feel like it or get inspired. If it's a career—or at least something you prioritize—you will write on a schedule, possibly even daily, no matter what.

Remember: writers write. Yes, they take vacations and celebrate holidays, too. But sometimes they write and *then* join in the festivities—especially if they don't want holidays to kick their hard-won writing habit to the curb.

How to Maintain Momentum and Feed Your Habit

By: Nina Amir

Once you have developed a writing habit, you face a new challenge: how to maintain your writing momentum and feed your daily writing habit. It doesn't take much to break that chain of Xs on your calendar that mark the number of days you wrote consistently.

A lot of writers take the Write Nonfiction in November Challenge or participate in National Novel Writing Month, and, during that 30-day period, manage to write consistently every day. When the writing event is over, they stop writing daily.

The same might be true if you push yourself for several months to write every day, and then, for some reason, you don't write for a few days. Maybe you get sick or things get super busy at your day job. Suddenly, it becomes much easier to find an excuse not to write . . . again and again and again. Before you know it, you no longer have a writing habit.

It is possible for you to produce the same results all year that you achieved in a month or two or three. By so doing, you turn your year into a prolonged writing marathon—without losing energy, stamina or productivity as the months go on. And you keep your daily writing habit going strong.

How to Maintain Your Writing Momentum

To maintain your writing momentum all year long, do the following:

1. **Write at least five times per week without fail.** If you stop writing on a consistent basis for more than a few days, like over the weekend, you will not maintain your writing habit.
2. **Continue setting intentions for what you want to accomplish each day, week, and month.** Know your writing goals for any given time period. Intentions are powerful. They have energy. Plus, they give you focus and clarity, which keep you inspired and motivated to write daily.

3. **Give yourself deadlines for each writing project you take on.**
Without deadlines, you are less likely to feel compelled to sit down and write every day. Deadlines force you to break tasks into doable pieces—one day of writing, then another day of writing, and so on. Completing small chunks regularly—maybe a chapter a week, or a blog post each day—makes you feel good about making progress toward your final goal. Plus, deadlines—even if they are mini ones (like 30 minutes of writing) add the urgency and pressure we sometimes need to get us focused and productive.
4. **Become accountable to yourself or someone else, if necessary.**
Make sure you let someone know that it's your goal to write daily—or five days per week—on an ongoing basis. Have them check on your progress. Be honest . . . even if you are your own accountability partner.
5. **Implement a system of rewards and punishments.** Old-fashioned . . . yes. Effective . . . more often than not. Your reward for writing each day might be something as simple as getting to watch your favorite television show that evening. Your punishment for not writing daily—not getting to watch it. Some writers, like Jonathan Maberry, pay themselves each time they complete their word-count quota for the day; Maberry puts a dollar in a jar, and pegs the money for a vacation. Maybe your money gets earmarked for a trip to your favorite clothing store or coffee shop or to purchase a ticket to a movie.
6. **Work on more than one writing project at a time—or know what's up next.** It's possible to get bored with a project or to feel uninspired for a few days and, therefore, not want to write. To keep writing, have a second writing project. Maybe you work on an eBook as well as your blog. When you don't feel like working on the eBook manuscript, you turn to blog posts. Or maybe you write a query letter or an essay. If you are lucky enough to have a magazine assignment, you might break your time daily into working on that article and working on your latest book project. With more than one project at the ready, you are more likely to write consistently. If that doesn't work, keep your next writing project in mind. Dangle it like a carrot so you feel

enticed to finish the work at hand and move onto whatever is next on the writing production schedule.

7. **Take care of you**—as Vivian (Julia Roberts) says to her friend, Kit, in *Pretty Woman*. Take care of your body and mind so you [become a high-performing writer](#) and finish a year-long marathon (or longer). Writing and publishing take a long time. Becoming a successful author isn't a meet-your-goal-fast endeavor. You need to be ready for the lengthy event—mentally and physically.

How to Feed Your Writing Habit

Writing can feel like an addiction. Remember: lots of writers—maybe even you—say they *must* write. They have necessity.

Like someone with an addiction, you need to feed your writing habit what it craves . . . and when it gets the craving. That's urgency.

While your writing habit doesn't always want more writing, it always needs an infusion of ideas or challenge. These things make your blood flow more quickly and give you a "high." They get you hooked on writing because they inspire you.

Here are a few things you can do to feed your writing habit:

1. **Continue challenging yourself.** We thrive on challenge—whether the challenge is to complete a book in 30 days, to write every single day for 66 days, to compose 1,000 words in an hour, or to finish an article on deadline. Continually feed your writing habit new writing challenges to keep it satisfied.
2. **Brainstorm new ideas regularly.** The more ideas you have, the more addicted you become to writing. Feed your habit an idea a day or week, as discussed earlier, and you won't have difficulty writing daily.
3. **Focus on passion projects.** When you feel passionate about a writing topic or project, you are more likely to sit down and write every day. Your habit craves passion. Provide this fodder daily, and you'll have a habit for life.
4. **Use purpose as a quick fix.** Your purpose is the real reason you write. When you feel your writing habit needs a quick fix, give it a dose of purpose.

Like a GPS, your purpose directs you toward ways to fulfill it. If writing is a way to fulfill your purpose, you will find yourself feeling more inclined to sit down at the computer and meet your daily writing goal with purpose running through your mind.

5. **Get inspired.** When you combine your passion and purpose, you get inspired. That feeling of inspiration pushes you to take action—inspired action, which is how you get inspired results. Your habit relies on inspiration. Find ways daily to get inspired, and you'll find your habit growing stronger.

A habit is not reliable on its own. It depends on you to keep it alive and thriving. When you regularly feed your habit, you will find that you keep a steady pace toward your writing goals. If you want more momentum, just increase the number of times you hit your habit with a dose of one of the options described in this chapter.

The Role of Purpose in Developing a Writing Habit

By: Nina Amir

Along with all the tips and strategies provided in this book, writing daily or even five days per week, takes commitment. There's no way around that.

But commitment is born out of purpose, a term used numerous times in this book.

What is purpose? Often called a "Big Why," your purpose is the reason you write. It's what gives your writing personal meaning.

With a clear sense of purpose, your ability to develop a writing habit increase exponentially.

You might refer to your purpose as a *calling*. You may feel you have a *mission* or *cause*. Maybe you feel pushed by the universe, God, or your higher self to write. The Still Small Voice whispers to you daily, "Write!"

Your purpose serves as your internal guidance system. Not only does it help you determine what to write, it helps you decide when to write. It's a useful tool for deciding if you should spend some time blogging, composing an article, putting an update on social media, or going to a writers' conference. It also helps you choose whether to go out with friends, watch a television show, or sit down and write.

When you feel inclined to ditch your scheduled writing appointment and go outside and enjoy the beautiful weather, ask yourself, "Is this decision aligned with my purpose? Does it help me fulfill my purpose?" Ask the same question when you want to take on a new volunteer position at your church, prepare to run a marathon, or do laundry.

If your purpose, like mine, involves writing, it will always guide you back to producing written words.

During the time when I wasn't writing consistently, I became depressed and unmotivated. I found many things to do that felt important and kept me super busy. But I didn't write anything that wasn't necessary to write. I completed my blog posts and weekly emails on schedule, but my book manuscript remained untouched.

At the point when I hired a coach to help me develop a writing habit again, I spent time thinking about my PQO and why it was so essential. During a session, the coach asked me why I wanted to write. Without thinking, I blurted out, “Because it’s my purpose.”

“Can you define that purpose?” he asked.

“To make a positive and meaningful difference with my words,” I said and began to cry. “If I don’t write, I don’t fulfill my purpose.” Thinking about not achieving that goal left me feeling profoundly sad.

With that insight, I was able to choose a daily writing schedule and to stick with it. Before long, I had a writing habit. And I became happier and more motivated to write consistently.

The same will be true for you.

If at any point as you attempt to develop a writing habit you feel frustrated, unsuccessful, or as if you are floundering, return to purpose. Ask yourself why you write. When you tap into the deep-seated reason that writing is important to you, you’ll feel a surge of inspiration. Writing daily will become a necessity and you’ll feel a sense of urgency if, like me, you don’t want to die with the words still inside you.

Whether you choose to write a few days per week or every day of the week, it’s my prayer for you that you find your purpose and that it guides you consistently to produce written work that makes a positive and meaningful difference in your life and in the lives of your readers.

It’s also my hope that your purpose helps you develop a writing habit. Writers write. And to fulfill your purpose as a writer, you, too, must write.

About the Editor



Nina Amir is an international speaker, award-winning blogger and journalist, 18X Amazon bestselling author, Author Coach, and one of 700 elite Certified High Performance Coaches in the world. Known as the Inspiration to Creation Coach, she helps people combine their purpose and passion, so they get inspired to action and **Achieve More Inspired Results.**

The author of *How to Blog a Book*, *The Author Training Manual*, and *Creative Visualization for Writers* (all from Writer's Digest Books), Amir also has 15 eBooks to her name, including: *Authorpreneur: How to Build a Business Around Your Book*, *The Nonfiction Book Proposal Demystified*, and the *Write Nonfiction NOW!* series of guides on virtual book tours, building author platform, publishing articles, creativity, and writing a book in 30 days. She has had as many as six books on the same Amazon Top 100 list (Authorship) at the same time.

Amir created the *Author of Change Coaching Program* and the *Write Your Transformational Book Challenge*. She also founded the *Write Nonfiction in November*

[\(WNFIN\) Challenge](#), often referred to as NaNonFiWriMo (the nonfiction counterpart to NaNoWriMo), and the [Nonfiction Writers' University](#). She developed a proprietary author training program for aspiring authors and author coaches based on her book *The Author Training Manual* as well as a career planning program for writers, bloggers, and experts.

Amir received a Certified High Performance Coach (CHPC®) certification from the High Performance Institute, which was founded by New York Times bestselling author Brendon Burchard. She uses this to coach a variety of clients as well as the writers in her [NFWU Masters](#) program.

Amir also offers personal development tools at [NinaAmir.com](#) and often teaches workshops, teleseminars, and webinars on how to become an author and achieve potential. She speaks to writing groups and at conferences internationally. She has been on the board of the BEA Bloggers event and the board of the National Association of Independent Writers and Editors.

Amir blogs at [How to Blog a Book](#), [Write Nonfiction NOW!](#), and [As the Spirit Moves Me](#). She was a regular contributor to [thebookdesigner.com](#) and [thefutureofink.com](#). She has also been the national Jewish Issue Examiner and the National Self-Improvement Examiner at [Examiner.com](#) and had a column on [VibantNation.com](#). She currently has a column at [Jenningswire.com](#).

Previously, Amir served as the writing and publishing expert on the popular Dresser after Dark radio show. For two years she was a featured expert on Conversations with Mrs. Claus, a podcast listened to by 130,000 people in 90 countries each month.

Amir earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Magazine Journalism with a concentration in psychology from Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. She has edited or written for more than 45 magazines, newspapers, e-zines, and newsletters and produced hundreds of articles in the process. She has interviewed such well-known figures as Usher, Deepak Chopra, Pete Seeger, and Michael Harner. Her essays have been published in five anthologies and appeared in numerous e-zines and Internet article directories. She also has produced hundreds of guest blog posts for well-known sites, and her work has appeared in such books as *Spiritual Pregnancy* and the fifth edition of *How to Write a Book Proposal*.

Amir also has a proven track record as a nonfiction book editor. One of her client's books, *Enlightened Leadership*, was self-published and then purchased and re-released verbatim by Simon & Schuster; it has sold over 320,000 copies to date. Another, *Radical Forgiveness*, won the Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Award (Inspirational category), received a contract from William Morrow but remained self-published and went on to sell 115,000+ copies; much later Sounds True purchased the book.

Born and raised in New York, Amir has traveled extensively around the world. She resides in the Santa Cruz Mountains in Los Gatos, CA. It is her passion to help writers remove blocks to success, stay inspired and motivated, and achieve impact with their work.

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To learn more about Nina and the courses, programs, and coaching she offers, visit www.ninaamir.com.

About the Contributors

Tom Corson-Knowles

Tom Corson-Knowles is the bestselling author of 27 books including [The Kindle Publishing Bible](#) and founder of [TCK Publishing](#), an independent book publishing company.

Tom has taught more than 80,000 authors how to write, publish and market their books like professionals through his online training courses, including eBook Publishing School, a free training program that shows authors how to publish and launch their first book.

Marc Guberti

Marc Guberti is a *USA Today* and *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author with over 100,000 students in over 180 countries enrolled in his online courses. He is the host of the Breakthrough Success Podcast and Radio Show, where listeners learn how to achieve their breakthroughs. He coaches content creators on how they can attract more traffic to their content and boost revenue. marcguberti.com

Mary Jaksch

Mary Jaksch is the Editor-in-Chief of WritetoDone.com. She is passionate about helping writers develop their innate talent. If you want to improve your writing overnight, [click here](#) to receive her free report, [How to Write Better: 7 Crucial Tips](#).

Linda Kane

Linda L. Kane is the author of *Death on the Vine*, *Chilled to the Bones*, and an upcoming re-release of *The Black Madonna*. She has written several children's books, including *Clyde to the Rescue*, *Matty's Adventures in Numberland*, *Cowboy Jack and Buddy*

Save Santa, Katerina Ballerina, and Witch Number is Which. She has an MA in Education, People Pupil Service certification, and worked as a school psychologist and as a learning disability specialist. lindaleekane.com

Mridu Khullar

Mridu Khullar Relph is an award-winning journalist and author and has written for *TIME*, *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *ABC News*, and more. She is the author of over a dozen books, including *Shut Up and Write: The No-Nonsense, No B.S. Guide to Getting Words on the Page*. She runs the popular website for writers TheInternationalFreelancer.com.

Carol Tice

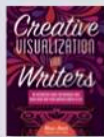
Carol Tice founded the award-winning [Make a Living Writing](#) blog in 2008, and the [Freelance Writers Den](#) learning and support community in 2011.

More from Nina Amir

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