

# Find Motivation to Start Writing – and Keep Writing

BY WRITING CONSISTENTLY, YOU'LL GAIN CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ABILITIES, CREATE MEANINGFUL STORIES, AND BUILD A PORTFOLIO OF WORK YOU CAN BE PROUD OF.

## So You Say You Want to Start a Regular Writing Practice?

If you want to be a writer, you have to write, and you have to write *a lot*. If you want to *excel* at writing, you'll have to write almost every day, usually churning out some bad prose before the best story lines emerge from your imagination.

That's okay. That's part of the writing process. Practice makes perfect, as they say. That's why it may be helpful to start a *writing practice* – to become the best writer you can be.

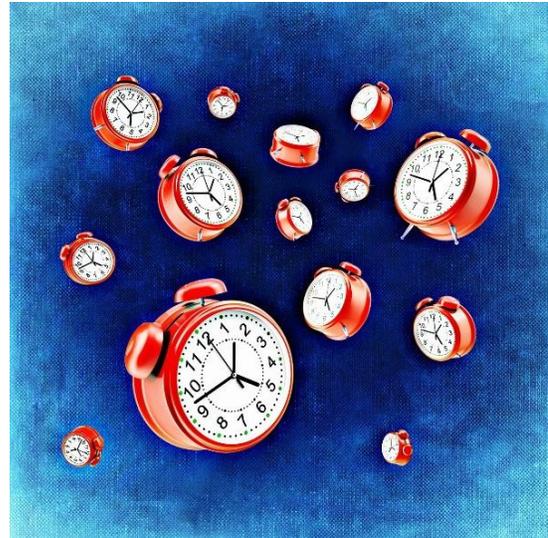
But what does it mean to maintain a writing practice? Most experts advise beginners to write every day to develop a routine, but the mere thought of writing every day can be daunting for some. How do you fit it into your schedule when you have a career, a home, family and other responsibilities?

The goal of writing every day is to achieve consistency, but consistency can mean different things to different people. For some, consistency means writing every day. For others, it may be writing three days a week. Yet for others, maybe once a week is all the time they have to devote to writing.

The answer ultimately is up to you. Only you know what your schedule will allow. Only you know what you want to achieve with your writing. Only you can decide how to set up your regular writing practice. One thing is clear. Writing for even a few minutes each day is better than not writing at all.

### What you say vs. what you do

If you've been telling yourself that you will one day write that best-selling novel, or if you've been telling your friends and family members that you can write better than so-and-so, who just published his tenth novel on the *New York Times* bestseller list, then you need to start living up to those words. It's one thing to say



you want to write a novel. It's quite another to actually write it.

This white paper won't guarantee that you'll publish a novel, or even a shorter piece like a short story or essay. What it will do is provide practical tips and inspiration for getting started in the writing process. I'll explain what a writing practice is, and how you can set one up that fits your writing goals and your lifestyle.

Even if you have started a writing routine, are you using your time wisely? Maybe you spend much of your time staring at a blank page or laptop screen. For beginning writers, getting started can feel overwhelming, like hiking through the woods without a map and compass. How do you begin? What do you write about? How many words or pages should you write? What should you do if you get lost or stuck along the way? The questions are as varied as the answers.

## What is a writing practice?

Routines and habits are born of a pattern of behavior that you do the same way or the same time every day, like brushing your teeth before bedtime or kicking off your shoes when you enter the door.

A writing practice, on the other hand, takes that routine a step further. Inspired in part by yoga and meditation, a practice shares characteristics with these mindful activities. Here are a few ways that a writing practice differs from a writing habit.

- \* A writing practice brings mindfulness to the experience. A writing routine may not provide that mindful experience. Participants choose the intention for their practice and determine how to measure the progress they make.

- \* A writing practice encourages healing and growth. By writing stories, essays and personal experiences, writers can connect with themselves on emotional, psychological, creative, and spiritual levels. They can face their fears and make progress toward healing old wounds.

- \* A writing practice helps participants improve their skill level. A writer may enter each session with a specific goal they want to achieve for that session, like writing 500 words. Perhaps they want to work on creating stronger dialogue and write with more tension and suspense. A writing practice gives them the space to work on those techniques.

- \* A writing practice is a personal experience. Like yoga and meditation, a writing practice is non-competitive. There's no pressure to perform except for yourself. Writers don't need to share their work with others unless they choose to do so.

- \* With a writing practice, the process of writing is more important than the end product. Because the focus of these sessions is on growth and self-improvement, every session moves toward some personal goal.

A writing practice isn't just for professional writers and journalists. It's also appropriate for hobbyists and creatives of all ages and education levels. Anyone who enjoys the creative challenges that writing brings can benefit from maintaining a writing practice.



*“Practice isn’t the thing you do once you’re good at it. It’s the thing that makes you good.” -- Malcolm Gladwell*

## Benefits of a writing practice

When you begin a regular writing practice, you grow as a writer because you give yourself time to think, dream and create. You also grow as a human being because you learn to be more empathic with yourself and your characters. It takes great courage to reveal so much of yourself in your stories.

<b>7 Benefits of a Writing Practice</b>	
1. Learn self-discipline	By writing regularly, you develop a new habit over time. You become more disciplined about writing and appreciate the structure writing every day provides.
2. Express yourself creatively.	The more you write, ideas flow more easily from within. It becomes easier to tell your stories. You also begin to notice stories all around you that you didn't see before.
3. Improve grammar and punctuation.	The mere practice of writing every day improves your technical skills. As you read other authors, take classes, participate in workshops, you learn better grammar and punctuation skills.
4. Seek quiet time for reflection.	Having a writing practice allows you to seek a private space for quiet reflection. Few people are able to produce quality work in noisy settings with a lot of people around. You need a quiet space to think, dream and contemplate your life's stories.
5. Experiment with different writing styles.	When you start writing, you give yourself permission to experiment – with different genres, points of view, story ideas, storytelling techniques, etc. which only motivates you to keep writing.
6. Flesh out story ideas.	You may have a glimmer of a story idea that you've had for months, even years. But you won't know how that idea will develop until you give it time and space to grow.
7. Build a portfolio of work.	You can work on a variety of projects, including essays, short stories and screenplays. Over time, you can build a healthy body of work that you can be proud of, whether or not it is published.



## Tips for staying motivated

Many writers believe that the hardest part about writing is just getting started. They're unsure how to set up a routine they can follow, or they fear exposing too much of themselves on the page. Others say they draw a blank when they face an empty page because they don't know what to write about.

If you find yourself getting stuck, here are a few tips and tricks to kick start your regular writing practice.

### 1. Write first thing in the morning.

Just like exercise or meditation, writing first thing in the morning can help you get it out of the way. Some people swear by completing morning pages – writing continuously without stopping for three pages, as popularized by Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way*. Once you are done with your morning writing session, it's done for the day and you can move on to other tasks.

**2. Schedule it in your calendar.** If you don't have time to write first thing in the morning, schedule time on your calendar for later in the day. Make an appointment with yourself to sit at a desk or computer. When you schedule time in your calendar for writing, you're more likely to stick to it. This time is just for you, much as you would schedule a massage or haircut. Putting it in your calendar shows you are serious and committed about giving your writing attention.

**3. Seek out writing prompts.** If you find it difficult to come up with your own story ideas, try writing prompts. There are numerous resources in print and online that offer writing challenges and prompts. You'll find a list of resources in the back of this white paper. Many books contain exercises to get you into the habit of writing.

**4. Set small achievable goals.** When you're starting out, set smaller goals to build your confidence. Consider setting smaller word

counts, say 100 words or 250 words per session. You can also set a time goal, such as 30-minute sessions, or number of pages, such as writing three pages every day. Once you achieve these smaller goals, you may have the confidence to tackle larger projects, like a collection of essays or a novel.

**5. Keep a writer's journal.** It's a good idea to keep a writer's journal to jot down ideas for scenes, blog posts, or characters. If you witness an accident, overhear a conversation, or observe the world around you, make note of them in your writer's journal. These ideas and memories can help you formulate a scene for a novel or short story. If you feel stuck with writer's block, go through the journal for inspiration.

**6. Play writing games.** Whenever you feel stuck or if you just need a quick warm-up before writing on your current project, try playing writing games. One idea is to keep a small container with random words on slips of paper. The words can be anything from the dictionary – car, dog, photograph, telephone, mystery. Pull out three slips and write a few short paragraphs that include those three words. If you want to challenge yourself further, choose five words. You can find numerous fun writing exercises for kids and adults with a quick Google search.

**7. Find a writing buddy.** Create a support system for yourself by finding a writing buddy. If you have a friend who also writes for a living, join together as a mutual support system. You can talk about story ideas, exchange writing tips, critique each other's work, etc. Having a writing buddy keeps you motivated and accountable for your progress. They can push you to keep writing when you feel your interest lagging.



**8. Skip the computer and write longhand.** It might be helpful to draft stories longhand rather than on your computer. Many famous writers swear by this technique, including Stephen King and Kristin Hannah. Studies show there's a mind-body connection between your brain and your hand during the act of writing. The words and phrases seem to flow more readily as you write. You can always edit your draft later. If you turn on the computer first, you may be tempted to edit as you write, which slows you down, answer emails or look up something on the Internet.

**9. Seek quiet places for reflection and inspiration.** If your mind draws a blank or you don't feel inspired to write, seek solace in nature. It can do wonders to clear your head and calm your spirit. You might even find something to write about.

**10. Read your favorite authors or writers' blogs.** Read authors whose works inspired you to begin writing in the first place. Or check out a few writers' blogs, which can provide tools



and techniques that you may not have tried before.

Knowing that other writers have gone through difficult stretches in their writing journey can help you through your own drought.

Using one, two or any combination of these ideas can give you the confidence you need to start writing – and keep writing.

To learn more writing tips and motivational tools, sign up to receive alerts for my blog, [Theregalwriter.com](http://Theregalwriter.com).

## Bookshelf

Build your writing library with these titles, and refer to them often when you need inspiration.

*The Successful Author Mindset: A Handbook for Surviving the Writer's Journey* by Joanna Penn  
*Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within* by Natalie Goldberg  
*On Writing* by Stephen King  
*Crafting the Personal Essay* by Dinty W. Moore  
*Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott.  
*Zen and the Art of Writing* by Ray Bradbury  
*Writing from the Heart* by Nancy Aronie  
*The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron  
*The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life* by Twyla Tharp