



Time Management Tips for Writers

Developing and Keeping a Writing Routine

Consistency is key! Developing a consistent writing routine builds momentum and creates a habit. It can also help signal to yourself and others that it's time to write. What's more, it sets you up to be focused and productive. And while motivation can ebb and flow, dedication ensures that you continue working towards your goals even when the excitement fades, leading to consistent progress and long-term success.

Set and Track Writing Goals

- Set daily and weekly writing goals to stay on track and measure your progress.
- Define specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for your writing project.
- Break down large projects into smaller, manageable tasks to maintain momentum (prioritize and batch tasks as relevant).
- Track progress and identify (and address) patterns or obstacles.
- Use visual aids like progress charts or checklists to track your writing sessions and goals. Seeing your progress can boost motivation and accountability.
- Celebrate small achievements and milestones.

Create a Writing Schedule and Stick to It

- Determine your best times for writing, whether it's early morning, late at night, or another time of day.
- Schedule your writing sessions during these peak times to maximize efficiency.
- On your calendar, dedicate specific times of the day or week for writing. Treat these time blocks as important appointments that cannot be moved or canceled.
- Set reminders and alerts to prompt you when it's time to start writing.
- Be firm but allow some flexibility for unexpected events. If you need to adjust your schedule, reschedule your writing session rather than skipping it entirely.

Optimize Your Environment

- Create a dedicated writing space that is comfortable and free from distractions. Alternatively, identify a place to write that works for you, such as a library, coffee shop, or park.
- Maintain a tidy and clutter-free workspace (both digital and physical).
- Have essentials on hand, including pens, notebooks, reference materials, water, and healthy snacks.
- Turn off notifications on your devices and use apps to block distracting websites.
- Play instrumental music or ambient sounds if they help you concentrate. Consider noise-canceling headphones if you are in a noisy environment.
- Adjust lighting and temperature to optimize productivity.

Protect Your Writing Time

- Communicate with colleagues, friends, and family about your writing schedule and ask for their support in respecting it.
- Set reminders and alarms to signal the start and end of your writing sessions.
- Use a "Do Not Disturb" sign or signal when you are in a writing session.
- Use an out-of-office reply during writing sessions to manage expectations about your availability.
- Have a plan for handling unexpected interruptions (e.g., politely but firmly defer non-urgent interruptions and keep a notepad handy to jot down any urgent thoughts or tasks that come to mind so you can address them later).
- Schedule buffer periods before and after your writing sessions to help transition smoothly and handle pressing tasks.

Start with a Warm-Up Activity

- Develop a pre-writing ritual to mentally prepare yourself for focused work. This could include a short meditation, a cup of tea, or a brief review of your goals.
- Spend the first 5-10 minutes freewriting or journaling to get into the writing mindset.
- Read something inspirational or relevant to your writing.
- Review what you wrote last session to get back into the flow.
- Create a brief outline for the session.
- Engage in a short mindfulness exercise, positive affirmation, or positive visualization.

Set Time Limits to Stay Productive

- Use a timer to break your writing session into manageable chunks; experiment with different time intervals to find what works best for you.
- Use techniques like the Pomodoro Technique (working for 25 minutes, then taking a 5-minute break) to maintain focus and prevent burnout.
- Incorporate writing sprints into your routine, where you write intensely for a short period (e.g., 15-30 minutes) without stopping. Combine sprints with breaks to maintain high energy and focus levels.
- Writing sessions can vary; some people write for 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon, while others prefer writing for 4 hours straight.



Productivity Strategies for Writers

Maintaining Momentum and Overcoming Challenges

Staying Motivated

- **Set Achievable Milestones:** Break down large projects into smaller, manageable milestones. Celebrate small wins to maintain a sense of progress and achievement.
- **Create a Vision Board:** Visualize your goals and keep reminders of your long-term objectives in a place you can see daily. Include images, quotes, and other motivational elements that inspire you.
- **Stay Connected with Your Purpose:** Regularly remind yourself why your work matters and how it contributes to your field. Reflect on the impact your research could have on your community or society.
- **Seek Accountability:** Partner with a colleague or join a writing group to stay accountable. Share your progress and challenges with others who can provide support and encouragement.
- **Reflect on Progress:** Periodically review your accomplishments and reflect on how far you've come. Keep a journal to document your journey, challenges, and successes.

Overcoming Writer's Block

- **Change Your Environment:** Sometimes a change of scenery can spark creativity and break through writer's block. Try writing in different locations, such as a coffee shop, library, or park.
- **Engage in Creative Activities:** Participate in activities like reading, drawing, or brainstorming to stimulate your creative thinking. Take part in writing prompts or exercises to get the ideas flowing.
- **Seek Feedback and Support:** Share your work with trusted colleagues or writing groups for feedback and encouragement. Discuss your challenges with others who can offer advice or a different perspective. Sometimes, verbalizing your thoughts can clarify your ideas and help you find solutions.
- **Set a Timer for Short Sessions:** Commit to writing for just 10-15 minutes. Sometimes, the pressure of a limited timeframe can help you start writing more freely.
- **Do Mind Mapping:** Create a visual map of your ideas. This can help you see connections and spark new insights that might not be apparent in a linear outline.
- **Switch Topics or Sections:** Move to a different part of your writing project that you feel more confident about or find more interesting at the moment.
- **Engage in Freewriting:** Spend a few minutes writing anything that comes to mind, even if it's unrelated to your project. This can help break down mental barriers and get you into a writing flow.

Fueling Creativity

- **Engage in Interdisciplinary Learning:** Explore topics outside your primary field to gain new perspectives and ideas. Attend seminars, workshops, or conferences in other disciplines.
- **Read Widely and Regularly:** Read a variety of academic journals, books, and articles to stay informed and inspired. Include both related and unrelated subjects to broaden your horizons.
- **Collaborate with Others:** Collaborate with colleagues from different fields to gain new insights and approaches. Engage in discussions and brainstorming sessions to generate fresh ideas.
- **Take Creative Breaks:** Engage in activities that stimulate your mind, such as puzzles, games, or hobbies. Spend time in nature or engage in physical activities to clear your mind and rejuvenate.
- **Attend Academic Events:** Regularly attend conferences, workshops, and seminars to stay engaged with your field. Participate in discussions and networking opportunities to stay inspired.
- **Stay Curious:** Cultivate a mindset of curiosity and continuous learning. Always be open to exploring new ideas, methods, and approaches in your research.

Avoiding Burnout

- **Set Realistic Expectations:** Be realistic about what you can achieve within a given timeframe. Avoid overcommitting and learn to say no when necessary.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Prioritize your physical and mental well-being by maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Engage in activities that help you relax and recharge, such as meditation, exercise, or hobbies.
- **Take Care of Yourself:** Ensure you get enough sleep, exercise, and nutrition to maintain your overall well-being. Schedule regular breaks to rest and recharge.
- **Take Regular Breaks:** Schedule regular breaks throughout your day to rest and prevent fatigue. Use techniques like the Pomodoro Technique to ensure you take short, frequent breaks.
- **Manage Stress:** Develop stress management strategies, such as mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, or journaling. Seek support from colleagues, mentors, or professional counselors if needed.
- **Create a Support System:** Build a network of supportive colleagues and friends with whom you can share challenges and successes and/or just have fun.
- **Prioritize and Delegate:** Focus on high-priority tasks and delegate less critical ones when possible. Use tools like project management software to keep track of tasks and deadlines.



Additional Resources for Writers

SUGGESTED READINGS

- How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing by Paul J. Silvia
- From Dissertation to Book (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing) by William Germano
- On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction by William Zinsser
- The Elements of Style, 4th Edition by William Strunk, Jr.
- Time Smart: How to Reclaim Your Time and Live a Happier Life by Ashley Whillans
- Unraveling Faculty Burnout: Pathways to Reckoning and Renewal by Rebecca Pope-Ruark
- Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing by John Trimble
- Writing Science How to Write Papers That Get Cited and Proposals That Get Funded by Joshua Schimel

UU FACULTY RESOURCES

- **Scholarly Writing Collective** is a "write-on-site" style accountability group. Participation involves a weekly 3-hour meeting for writers to focus on their research, with a half-hour of conversation and goal-setting to start off. It is sponsored by Rhetoric & Writing Studies, University Writing Center, and Marriott Library.
writingcollective.utah.edu
- **National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD)*** is a nationally-recognized, independent organization that provides online career development and mentoring resources. As an institutional member, U of U faculty, post-docs, and grad students can access to a variety of their programs, services, and resources at no cost.
officeforfaculty.utah.edu
- **Faculty Success Program*** is the NCFDD's intensive virtual boot camp designed for tenure-track and tenured faculty who are looking to increase research and writing productivity while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. This 12-week program offers intensive coaching, weekly small group sessions, time tracking tools, master coach sessions, and peer support.
www.ncfdd.org/fsp-bootcamp
- **Faculty Life Series*** provides support for faculty personal and professional growth. These informal meetings take place the first Wednesday of each month from 9:00am - 10:00am, and are open to all interested faculty members.
officeforfaculty.utah.edu
- **Retreat To Recharge Fellowship*** supports faculty in prioritizing and engaging in activities that recharge and rejuvenate them outside of academia. Teams of 3+ faculty members (tenure-line and/or career-line) are encouraged to apply. Proposals of up to \$5,000 will be considered. Applications are generally due in late January.
officeforfaculty.utah.edu
- **Taft-Nicholson Summer Fellow Residency** provides intensive, dedicated time in the summer for U faculty in all disciplines to work on writing, research, creative projects, or other scholarly pursuits during a 1- to 3-week residency at the Taft-Nicholson Environmental Humanities Education Center in Montana. Participants receive up to \$2,000 to cover the cost of travel, food, and supplies. Applications are usually due in late March.
taft-nicholson.utah.edu/faculty-fellows/summer-fellowship-residency.php
- **Author Services** at the Marriott Library offer open access publishing options, personalized book and journal reading recommendations, finding the right publisher/journal/conference, understanding publishing contracts, understanding copyright, learning how to craft authorship policies for your research group, and more.
lib.utah.edu/services/author.php
- **Getting Published Workshop** (RED 357 course) is a 2-hour online, self-paced course that presents strategies for researchers and other academicians to publish their papers in well-regarded journals in their field
utah.catalog.instructure.com/browse/research-education/research-education-red/courses/red-online-getting-published-responsible-authorship-and-peer-review---faculty-staff

*For more information about these resources, go to the UU Office For Faculty > Faculty & Leadership Development > Faculty Career Enhancement > For All Faculty (<https://officeforfaculty.utah.edu/home-template-2-2/faculty-career-enhancement/faculty-career-enhancement/for-all-faculty/>)