



Organize Your Writing Life

-Edie Melson

Tips for Organizing Your Writing Time

- **1. Take a look at your goals:** It's important to have goals—and it's important to have written goals. It's easy to just float along, taking things as they come. But when we do that, it's hard to make progress—and it's even harder to evaluate progress. Beyond that, there's something almost magical about writing down your goals. Having them recorded somewhere gives them weight and makes it easier to make them a priority.
- **2. Let go of your expectations:** No this isn't a contradiction of #1 above. There is a huge difference between goals and expectations. I bet if you're honest with yourself you have quite a few expectations—from what you expect from yourself, to what you expect from others. For me, when I took a hard look, a lot of those expectations were totally unreasonable. So spend some time and take a hard look at your expectations. The ones that are reasonable, make into goals and priorities. The rest of them . . . well . . . just throw them away.
- **3. Determine when, in a 24-hour period, you are most creative:** Some of us are night people, some are morning people, and some of us work best in the afternoon. But we each have a specific time when the words and ideas tend to flow easier. Look at your internal clock and figure out when that time is. Then, guard it like you're guarding gold. Really that's what you're doing. Our income and dreams are locked up tight with our ability to create. When we figure out the time that work best for creative work, it's like someone has handed us pure gold.



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Tips for Organizing Your Writing Time (continued)

- **4. Come up with a way to schedule your time.** I know not everyone can have a detailed schedule. But truthfully, if you're trying to carve out time to write (and who isn't?), you need to schedule that time. There are lots of methods to help with time management from an old fashioned spread sheet to the Pomodoro Technique. Do some research and find something that works for you.
- **5. Build in regular breaks.** Especially when I'm on a deadline, I've found that taking regular breaks greatly improves my productivity. A good friend and spiritual mentor of mine Kent Pate has a saying, "Divert daily, withdraw weekly, abandon annually."
- **6. Evaluate how much time you're spending on social media.** If it's more than thirty minutes a day, it's time to re-evaluate. After thirty minutes, your return on investment takes a severe nosedive in the downward direction.
- **7. Take care of yourself physically.** This means getting enough sleep, eating well, and especially exercising. The sedentary lifestyle of a writer can quickly take its toll on us physically and mentally. Sure these things take time—often time we don't feel we can spare. But even though this may seem counterintuitive, it will streamline your writing life. You can accomplish so much more when you are physically healthy and mentally alert.



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Tips for Organizing Writing

- **1. Always keep a notebook nearby.** It doesn't matter if it's a digital app or a physical book filled with actual paper. All too often I've thought I'd remember an idea or a new twist without writing it down. I rarely do. Beyond that, I spend a lot of time and angst trying to remember the brilliant idea.
- **2. When driving, make sure you have a voice recorder within arm's reach.** My darling husband decreed note-taking off limits to me while driving—even if I was stopped at a red light. Because of that, I used to keep a digital recorder with me. Now that I have my smart phone, I use that to capture fleeting thoughts.
- **3. Snag headlines and news stories that intrigue you.** You can take a screenshot of digital articles, or use a program like Evernote. For newspaper headlines, use old-fashioned scissors and a manila file folder to keep track.
- **4. When you snap or snip an interesting article,** be sure to include notes to remind yourself why that particular piece caught your attention. There is nothing more frustrating than coming across something you thought was important with no idea why you thought it was important.



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Tips for Organizing Writing (continued)

- **5. Set up a system to keep track of those illusive ideas.** These can be digital documents on your computer or a filing system in a nearby drawer, just make sure you can retrieve those ideas after you record them. For me, I use a series of files on my computer.

- Blog posts
 - Devotions
 - Quotes
 - Book ideas
 - Article ideas
 - Links
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Edie Melson—author, blogger & speaker—has a passion to help those who are struggling find the God-given strength they need to triumph through difficult circumstances. Connect with her at www.EdieMelson.com

