

Working On It!

Strategies for your writing process

Habitual Writing

For large writing projects such as a thesis or dissertation, cultivating a regular writing habit can be a helpful way of maintaining momentum and preventing a last-minute time crunch. Setting aside short, regular writings sessions, can help you ensure continued progress on long-term writing projects while preventing the burnout and stress associated with deadline-driven writing spurts.

Try It!

A key part of habitual writing is making a commitment to writing for a specified amount of time at regular intervals. This helps provide structure to your writing practice and keeps your writing goals manageable. This kind of writing commitment is solely for your benefit as the writer, so feel free to experiment to find what works best for your process and life. For some writers, 30-minutes per day Monday-Friday is most effective, while for others 90 minutes three times a week is more sustainable. If you are not sure where to start, try 30-minutes per day for five days and adjust as needed. Once you have a duration and interval that feels workable, incorporate it into your regular schedule. For some writers, this might mean scheduling a daily window of writing time (e.g., 9:30-10:00am), while for others it might simply mean penciling in 30 minutes when the opportunity presents. Regardless of which method you adopt, maintaining the habit is key. The more regular and habitual your practice becomes, the easier it will become and the more progress you will see.

In Practice

I tried practicing habitual writing for a five-day period, which required me to block out thirty minutes to write every day. When I first started this activity, it was very difficult to make myself sit down to ONLY write. Remembering to schedule in the 30-minute time slot was difficult at first and I almost forgot the second and fourth days. HOWEVER, I was really impressed with how much easier this exercise made getting into my project. Because so much of what I'm working on requires a specific vocab, focus, and way of expressing my thoughts, it can often feel like I've "forgotten" how to write my thesis, especially if I've not gotten to interact with it for several days. My advisor actually suggested a version of this method to me earlier in the quarter for this same reason, and while I tried to regularly set half-hour time slots to read through and write my chapter, this forced me to actually make good on her advice. It made me feel like I slipped into both my argument and the language I needed to use to write my argument increasingly quickly, and by the end of the five days it was an almost immediate transition from working on TAs and OWRC related responsibilities to attending to my own work. Overall, I would highly recommend this approach to anyone, especially those of us with ADHD, if they are working on a bigger scale/longer term project.

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