

Developing your writing practice

Timed Writing Sessions

Time management in writing can be a challenging prospect, particularly when you are writing on your own. Timed writing sessions can be a useful method of task-oriented time management, particularly for writers who struggle to get started or with balancing work and break time.

From a fellow UW writer:

Some initial impressions I have from my experience trying timed writing sessions: 1) I tend to ignore the timer, and work through the 5-minute break. 2) I usually regret when I do that, because the 5-minute break really does help. I noticed that because I had scheduled my timed writing for a large chunk of time, instead of pausing for breaks, it was easy to get lost in the writing time.

I found the Pomodoro Technique to be most effective when I am forced to write in a short period of time. For example, if I only have an hour, Pomodoro makes it feel less overwhelming. One downside to Pomodoro is that it sort of assumes those first 25 minutes will be productive. However, I feel it usually takes me about 20 minutes to get into a groove, or to get "into" my writing/outlining etc. On a positive side, I really enjoyed pomodoro for the reading or editing part of writing. It felt very manageable to use it for reading/skimming a paper related to my writing, drafting out part of an outline, mind-mapping, or doing edits.

-- Delaney

Try it for yourself

One popular iteration of the timed writing session approach is the Pomodoro Technique, which uses cycles of 25-minute work sessions

combined with 5-minute breaks to facilitate productivity and help users better estimate and manage their time. Regardless of the length of writing time you choose, timed writing sessions should provide scaffolding for your work, helping you maintain focus but preventing marathon writing that can lead to burnout.

For writers new to timed writing sessions, try starting with the Pomodoro Technique. You should know within a session or two if this time breakdown will work for you. From there, modify accordingly until you find a time duration that feels productive and sustainable for you. Once you have a time duration that works for you, you can incorporate timed writing sessions into your writing practice as appropriate. This technique can be particularly helpful when you are struggling to feel motivated or to focus.