

Writer's Quest

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Dear Writer,

So here we are: the last issue for 2007. We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas and a fun-filled and safe new year. The next Writer's Quest issue will be out in February.

Please contact us via email or check our web site if you would like to contribute to our e-zine.

Happy writing!

From the Writer's Quest team

Writers' Corner Solving Writers' Block: Mastering Conflict

by Mary Broadhurst © 2007

Last week we talked about (and hopefully you've created) a story involving conflict with two characters. Take that existing piece and add another character to that scene, but have this character manipulate or fuel the dispute with what may seem like innocent comments, but is in fact an underhanded way to continue the dispute.

Think about what this character's motives are. Is he/she going to agree with one of the other characters, consistently changing sides, or have another point of view? Is he/she trying to break up a relationship? Is it for financial gain? He/She might enjoy causing riffs and watching the excitement and, therefore, will say whatever is necessary to keep the clash alive.

Tell the world about your work. [Send us](#) the release date and/or a review. It's free.



Having trouble with your story or article?

Why not post the problem to our Writers' Workshop forum and gain help from other writers. It's free!

Sentence Starter ...

Many writers suffer the 'blank page' complex; therefore, each month we will supply you with a first sentence. Now your page isn't blank any more. Let your imagination take you on a journey.

This issue's sentence starter:

The rain was a welcome sight at first, but that was before it started to rise to my ...

Views on Writing

No Time - Your Best Fake Excuse to Avoid Writing

(Reprint article)

By Cynthia Morris

After a full day of work, family and life, you fall into bed exhausted. Mentally ticking off your to-do list, you cycle through shopping lists, phone calls, appointments, feeling good about what you have gotten done, until you get to the thing you really want to do. You lay there, bathed in regret - why didn't you get your writing done today? You vow to do it tomorrow. You will make time for your novel or that article you know would sell. You consider angles, write a few lines in your head, and fired up with enthusiasm for your writing, you fall asleep. The next day continues on much like the one before and you live the life of an unfulfilled writer, all because you do not do the simple work of making time to write.

The task of finding and dedicating time for your writing can be daunting. Many people who want to write identify this as the number one challenge - finding time. How can you give yourself more time when there are a limited number of hours in the day plus housework, family, a job, and other personal or professional obligations to fulfil? You can't create more hours in your day, but you can restructure the ones you have to make more time for your writing. As a writer and a coach for writers, I have identified some of the reasons behind the challenge, and

identified some of the reasons behind the challenge, and offer some ways to get around the lack-of-time excuse.

Often 'lack of time' is really a mask for writing fears. The work of writing, while satisfying, can be difficult to make time for it. We put it off to do the easier things, the things we know how to do. Think about the things you do when you are procrastinating getting to the writing. Do you clean, cook, or exercise? Do you spend your valuable writing time reading or watching TV? The act of writing challenges us to dive into ourselves and come out with something tangible. This is not easy. Notice when you are resisting and when you really do not have time to write.

There are a limited number of hours in the day, but often we give away our passion and power by forgetting that we can always choose what to do with our time. I can hear you saying, 'Well, I have my job, and then I have my family, and kids, and all these other obligations'. Your roles become more powerful than you are because you believe you have no choice in the matter. Certainly dinner needs to be served. Certainly you have other commitments that you need to honour. But who decided that your writing wasn't as important as everything else? What would life be like if your passions had a place in the schedule as well? What difference would it make to the people in your life if you staked a claim for your writing? Hmmm ...

With the help of a perspective shift, you may realise that your writing is important, too. Perhaps in your mind it has been important, but you haven't taken that extra step to actually make space for it. Without space, your writing becomes a burden on your back, something you want to do but can't. You then become a victim of your life. No fun.

Look at the following ways to restructure your time both internally and externally. Then try out a few of them and see what works for you.

Get in the habit of writing in short bursts of time. Give yourself ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes to write and then learn how to make the most of those bursts of writing. This means sidestepping the wandering or procrastination that distract you from writing.

Wake up early. Set your alarm twenty minutes early and give yourself that time to write. If the thought of getting up earlier makes you cringe, try giving yourself time at the end of the day.

Do you watch TV? Give it up and give yourself more time to write. Many people use TV as a way to zone out and

to write. Many people use TV as a way to zone out and relax at the end of the day, but isn't there a better way to relax and be entertained? Yes! Use your writing to relax. Which leads me to ...

Reframe the way you think about writing. Of course the art of writing is work, but if you think of it as drudgery and something that requires a lot of you, you are missing out on the rejuvenating aspects of the practice.

Whenever you do get a chance to write, take a minute when you are finished and write down three words that describe how you feel after writing. Use these words as a lure to get you to the page when you feel tired or uninspired.

Take part of your lunchtime to write. Or, use your allotted coffee or smoke breaks to slip away from work and scribble a few lines.

The real issue is often time management. We may have enough time, but do not use it in a way that honours our priorities. What are your priorities? If you are not showing up for your writing, maybe it isn't a priority. What else is going on in your life that is more compelling than writing? Take a moment now to jot down where you spend your time. What do you notice about your priorities?

Once you have a clear picture of where your time goes, how do you feel about it? Does the way you spend your time reflect what is important to you? Work and other obligations seem more fixed and indeed they may be for now, but where else can you make decisions to get writing into your life?

Perhaps your topic or project isn't seductive enough. I have been working on the same project for years now, and there were times when I just wasn't interested. I gave myself a break, knowing that I would come back to it. Now I have an angle on it that is compelling and fun, and I am more eager to make time for it. How can you approach your project in a way that would entice you to make time for it? How do you find a writing project that earns your time and attention?

Play with an entirely new perspective. Let go of the idea of you as a writer. Perhaps now that you are clear about how you spend your time you are happy with it. Maybe you have realised that you really don't want to make the effort to write at this point after all. How free would you feel if you let yourself off the hook for having the writing urge and not having the time to indulge in it?

Try a tool I use with my clients. Imagine giving up writing, and the idea of writing. I call it 'taking away the bone'. Think of a dog with a bone. Imagine trying to grab the bone from the dog's mouth. The dog will hang onto that bone for dear life. If the thought of losing your writing urge makes you want to grab onto it even tighter, it could be a signal that you need to do what it takes to make writing a priority in your life. Commit to yourself as a writer, get clear about your writing projects, and let it happen.

About the Author: Cynthia Morris of Original Impulse helps writers and visionaries make their brilliant ideas a reality. Author of *Create Your Writer's Life: A Guide to Writing with Joy and Ease*, and *Go For It! Leading Tours for Fun and Profit*, Cynthia coaches from Boulder.

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Résumé Builder:

Wrestling with Writing and Christmas

by M Broadhurst © 2007

'I want to have my novel completed by the end of the year.'

Sound familiar? Probably because people tend to look at the end of the year as a perfect time to end a task and make way for new objectives. Unfortunately, when we make such statements like the above one, we forget that we have said the same thing for a number of other things we wish to accomplish, and that the silly season disrupts our usual routine. So when writers say they want to finish a story by the end of the year then they may find themselves struggling, which might even provoke guilt, regret or frustration from failing the target set.

Accept that you don't have super human powers, and that you cannot move faster than a locomotive or a speeding bullet. There's not much point in rushing through your story if the end product is substandard and will require additional work anyway. Don't worry about it; enjoy the celebrations and being with family and friends that this season offers. Squeeze a bit of writing in during moments when you have time, but focus on quality and not quantity. In other words, do your best.

without confusion. Leave notes to yourself explaining what you've done, what you're up to, and what needs to be addressed. This saves countless hours of fumbling through things trying to decipher where you're up to and where you were heading.

Actually, taking a break from writing can refresh your creativity and produce better material. You may even find ideas coming more freely now that you have given your mind permission to relax, especially if you were struggling with writer's block. Whenever an idea comes to you, jot it down in a notebook and refer back to it when your break is over.

It can be difficult to get yourself to pick up your story after your break. You may say something like: 'I'll do it tomorrow when I feel more motivated'. Tomorrow never comes, and no one knows if they will feel motivated or not tomorrow so don't put it off for lame excuses. Set a date to return to writing and stick with it. Set a target of how long you plan to write for this day, for instance, two hours. This doesn't include the time you spend getting your cup of coffee, dusting the desk, straightening up files or anything else you think of to delay working on your story.

At the end of your writing target, spend five minutes to set writing targets for the coming week. Providing you stick to your targets, you will finish that story.

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