



Getting started ... and staying with it

Writing is a bit like exercise – the more you do, the better you get.

And like exercise, sometimes you just don't want to get out there but you do it anyway. The first few minutes may be tough, but once you get going, you're off. It's a discipline. You do it whether you want to or not and you can't wait around for inspiration to motivate you.

It's the same with writing. It won't happen unless you practice. With practice, you can develop resolve and the ability to silence the 'I don't want to do this right now'. You just do it – and once you're in the zone, you'll love it, you won't want it to end and you'll look forward to the next time.

Whether you're starting out on a project, or have something under way, it can be hard to stay motivated. We can always come up with reasons not to write. Here are five common ones:

- I don't know how to start
- I don't have time to write
- I'm having trouble keeping focused (i.e. a lack of structure)
- I lack perseverance
- all of the above are bringing me down and I lack motivation

I've put together some 'tips' that may help you get cranked up, and keep you trucking along. Think up your own tips too, things that work well for you. Be open to sharing with other writers. They're probably experiencing the same issues and may have ideas that'll help you too.

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1. Find a place to write that is quiet and secluded where you won't have people traipsing by.
 2. Create an 'ergonomic' environment; set yourself up comfortably with desk, chair, light etc.
 3. Eliminate distractions. Disconnect the internet so you're not checking emails, turn off the phone, tell others in the house that you are writing and don't want to be bothered.

4. Create a writing schedule and stay with it. Make writing part of your routine, like exercise and going to work. Make it a time that is realistic for you, where you have nothing else that needs to be done, and preferably three consecutive days minimum in a row. Daily is ideal.
5. Set a goal, a certain number of pages per day, or words per day, maybe 500 is achievable, or 1000. Make it a realistic goal to avoid disappointment. Measure and record your progress.
6. Celebrate your achievements and writing milestones. Have a special celebratory night out with friends when you've reached 10,000 words, or reward yourself with a coffee outing or some fabulous chocolate when you've successfully knocked off your goals for the week.
7. If you get stuck and can't get started, try some writing prompts. Here are some suggestions. They may not have anything to do with your work in progress, but they'll help 'get you fired up' so you can continue with your project: write about ...
 - the place you loved best as a child: that might be a swing in the back yard, a favourite holiday bach at a beach, your grandmother's warm kitchen smelling of chocolate cake
 - the day you left home, school, a place, or a person
 - the most frightening thing that ever happened to you
 - being close to nature ... in a forest, on a mountain top, swimming in the sea
 - a place you love – tell me the details – what is it, where is it, what does it smell/sound/look like?
 - your earliest memory; were you one year old, two, three?
 - your favourite colour – tell me where you see it. Is it a flower? Is it in the sky? In the hills out the back of your house, on the shelf in the living room?
 - loss and grief; tell me about the death of your mother, father, or beloved pet, or tell me of the day you lost your self-confidence
 - tell me about your favourite food, use all of your senses to describe it to me so I'll find it irresistible and want to run out and get some right away.
8. Talking to other writers can be really helpful because it's likely they've experienced the same stuff. Maybe you have a trusted friend who will read your work, give constructive feedback and help you through the road block. Don't ever give up.