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Making The Time To Write That Novel

By Patty Apostolides

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Finding the time to write a novel is one of the major issues confronting writers, particularly those who haven't been published yet. How does one justify to themselves, or to their loved ones, that they need time to write if they have demands on their time, like a job, or a house to be cleaned, a family to be fed, or shopping to do? They make the time.

To make time, one would have to sit down and plan it. If this is not done, then writing will become a haphazard event, dictated by a whim, or a passing urge, rather than a scheduled time. This often results in the book never really being finished. You do want to finish that book, don't you? Below, I have my own suggestions as to how to make time.

Think about your daily schedule, just like when you do a budget, only instead of money, you'll be budgeting time.

Then get a nice large desktop calendar, the ones that cost about two dollars. Begin filling in the mandatory slots for the week. Do you have a work schedule, or a doctor's appointment, a meeting to go to, etc.? Then write these times down.

Next, fill in the times for meals, showers, shopping, socials, etc.

Now look at the times that you are free. Please don't say there isn't any time left! There will probably be some time available somewhere. Maybe it'll be at lunchtime, if you are working, or after dinner, or even during the day if you're a stay-at home parent (when junior is napping).

If you are a new writer, start slow. Maybe find one hour a day and reserve that for your writing. Go ahead and write the date in the calendar. You just made an appointment with yourself. Now do it for every day of the week. You decide if you want to work the weekend or not.

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If you are a more seasoned writer, you will probably need more time. I find that I need a minimum of three hours a day to write. Sometimes I may also use this time doing research for my book.

Once you make that appointment with yourself, that's the easy part. Next, you have to keep that appointment. There are so many instances when something else interferes with your designated time. I know, I've been there. Therefore, you need to have some flexibility. Always have a reserve time slot handy in case you don't make your date. Although I was pretty regular and rarely strayed from my afternoon schedule, there were times that I just couldn't stay on track. I learned to be flexible and wrote in the evenings. The important thing to remember is to not stray too far from your schedule, because it defeats the purpose.

Once you've scheduled your writing dates, then prepare your work area. Try and have it ready before your designated time. If you have a computer, make sure the printer has enough paper, and there's a floppy disk available to save your Word files in. If you use a pen and paper instead, make sure you

have them handy. Also, make sure you have enough lighting in the room. You wouldn't want to strain your eyes. Make your writing area as comfortable as you can.

Now try writing for a week. How did it feel? If you're like me, it felt great. Not only did it feel great writing, but I quickly found out it wasn't enough time! One does need time to get into the story, to think about the dialogue, to write that chapter. Sometimes you'll be so absorbed in your writing, that you may surpass the hour you designated, and that's fine if you go beyond your scheduled time (unless it affects your other activities). There will be other times when you'll sit there doodling, trying to write something, and it won't be easy, so you'll probably finish quicker than the allotted time.

The important thing is to write on a consistent basis. It's similar to exercise. In order to see results, you have to do it persistently and over a long period of time. A novel can never be written in one sitting! Over the course of your writing, you'll be learning valuable skills that can only come from experience. Also, you'll notice that the more you write, the easier it'll become.

As you follow your daily writing schedule, you will show your loved ones that you are serious about your work, and more importantly, prove to yourself that you can write that novel!

I wrote my first novel in 1-½ years. Being a stay-at-home mother gave me the opportunity to write during my baby's naps, which averaged about 2-3 hours each afternoon. It is very rewarding to see your novel taking shape. If I could do it, then so can you!

Patty Apostolides is author of Lipsi's Daughter. She has published several articles and poems. Her website showcases her works:

It's Your Life – Take Control

By Darren Robinson

Making The Time To Write That Novel

If you seem to spend much of your life doing things for other people, if being ordered about from dawn till dusk is a normal component of your life, do something about it.

Perhaps you love being with your children, but don't seem to have the time. Perhaps you yearn to become an entertainer instead of the current job that you hate. Perhaps the only reason you watch TV at night is because working all day has made you exhausted. What about your partner – do you have a happy relationship or does it contribute to your misery?

I'm not suggesting that you just yell at the next person who crosses your path, but I am suggesting you sit down with a fresh piece of paper & make a couple of lists about your life. Getting your life in some kind of perspective is one of the most important things an individual can do. It recharges our mental batteries and gives us renewed drive & purpose.

Write down the things that MEAN THE MOST TO YOU.

Be honest ! Don't write things that you feel "should" be written. You have no obligations here, except to yourself ! Likewise, don't omit things that may seem silly.

If your job sucks, don't write "job".

If your husband is a fool, don't write "husband".

If your cat means more to you than world peace, write "cat".

Now, in a separate list, write down the things you are INTERESTED IN ACHIEVING. Again, don't censor yourself. Disregard that little voice in your head that always says "You can't – you're not good enough". Tell it to shut up. Start writing !

If you are overweight or pregnant, don't be afraid to write "athlete".

If you are lonely or isolated, don't be afraid to write "marriage".

If you drive a taxi, don't be afraid to write "internet millionaire".

Once you have listed both the things that truly mean the most to you in your life, and the things you would really love to achieve, making a change in your life becomes easier and inevitable.

The process of seizing control of your life's direction is not terribly difficult or complex. By making a couple of simple lists, you have crystallised & defined your desires. Now you just need to step up and make it happen.

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