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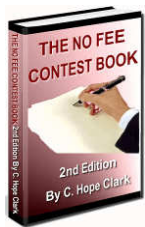
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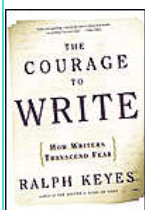


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Writing is a Business, Really

by [Dana Davis](#)

When I first told various family and friends that my writing career is like any other business, I got glassy-eyed stares and sympathetic nods that indicated they didn't understand. For some reason, many outside the writing community have trouble accepting writing as a job and tend to think of it as a fun way to pass the time. Playtime for those who don't have a "real" job. Of course, writing is satisfying or none of us would do it, but it's also a business and, like any business, it requires discipline and a lot of work.

After publishing a few short stories and now working full-time as a writer, I sometimes feel as though I still have to convince people, with the exception of my husband and a few writer friends, that I do indeed have a legitimate career. I've managed to persuade some and reduce the stress that family and friends can have on the work-at-home writer.

I have a home office with my computer, writing books, notes and other writing essentials in one place so I don't have to go searching for anything. I try to keep my work schedule as fixed as possible, just as I would if employed for a corporation. Monday through Friday I get up around six a.m. to have breakfast with my husband, take care of the pets and get any laundry done for the day. Around nine a.m., I put my butt in my office chair and check e-mails. Anything not important can wait until later in the day to answer. Then I write at least a couple of pages before lunch and try for more.

During this time, I don't answer the phone unless I'm expecting a call. This is an important step to convince

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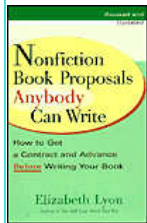
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well-meaning family and friends that I am indeed working. Otherwise, they tend to think I'm available because I'm "not doing anything but writing." Around noon, I take an hour for lunch and watch TV, read or catch up on some chore, and then I'm back to my office. If I have research to do or synopses or queries to prepare for submission, this is the time I do those things. Now, I'm not saying I stick to this exact schedule every day. As those of you who work at home already know, unexpected things happen that can wreak havoc on a too-rigid schedule. But I stick to this plan as much as I can.

For me, writing isn't just about sitting at the computer and pounding out page after page, though that's a huge and important part. Socialization, especially with other writers helps keep me fresh and enthused. So, I try to schedule coffee or a luncheon with other writer friends once a month just to share ideas and blow off steam about this business. Having a support system has been a real boost for me. I also go to occasional writing classes and conventions to immerse myself in that atmosphere. There's nothing like having other writers in which to bounce around my ideas and problems. They understand exactly what I'm going through because they've been there at one time or another. And I read, read, read. I learn so much just by reading someone else's work.

As my work day progresses, I take an hour or so in the afternoon, usually around three o'clock, to get some exercise. We have a home gym for this purpose. Okay, so you might be thinking, what does exercise have to do with writing? Well, there's nothing like an hour of kickboxing to get out frustrations and clear my mind if I'm having a tough day. Sometimes a walk or stretching or even vacuuming the house gives my creative juices a fresh start. Exercise is especially helpful if I'm stuck on a scene and not sure what to do or just hitting an afternoon slump. By giving my brain a break and some added blood flow, the ideas usually flood in when I return to my computer.

Snacks and hydration are important, too. Since I tend to get hungry between meals when I'm working, I also keep things like fruits, nuts, peanut butter or the occasional granola bar handy. Otherwise I have trouble concentrating when my stomach's grumbling. I try not to eat too many sugary snacks as they tend to make me lethargic and what I call "brain-stupid" after the initial sugar high wears off.

I'm also a notorious sticky-note person. I've tried the computer version but since I had to boot up whenever I wanted to jot anything down, it wasn't ideal. I keep note pads around the house, in my purse and in the car for when those unexpected inspirations hit me. If I don't write them down immediately, I'll forget all about them. My computer desk is usually colorful with sticky-notes until I can get them organized into a notebook or



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computer file for later use. My husband, who doesn't like notes on his desk, is always commenting, "You just love sticky-notes, don't you?" Then he smiles and shakes his head. Well, it works for me.

By keeping to a schedule and treating my writing career as any other job, I find that I don't get into slumps very often and family and friends respect my work time much more. Of course, I have to believe in and enjoy what I'm writing about or I couldn't do it and wouldn't want to.

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Dana Davis is an avid, work-at-home writer. After receiving her B.A. in Creative Writing from California State University in Long Branch, she and her husband moved to the Arizona desert where they now live. Her work has also appeared in Fantasy, Folklore & Fairytales and Visions and Voices Monthly under her former pseudonym, Jodi Fox. Currently, Dana is writing a fantasy novel, marketing several others, and is in the process of building her personal Web site. She is a member of the Arizona Author's Association.

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