3 Simple Ways to Boost Your Writing Speed by 30% Virtually Overnight

Many people — including some professional writers — think of writing as a difficult, tedious job that's about as much fun as having a root canal or doing income taxes or clearing out the garage. But it doesn't have to be that way!

Writing can be both fun and interesting, if you take the misery out of it. Here are three really simple steps you can take to make your writing faster, easier and much more fun.

1. Stop editing WHILE you write

Most of the writers I work with often edit WHILE they write. What does this look like? They write their first sentence and start editing it before they even get the period in place. Some of them may manage a paragraph, but then they go back and start rewriting that paragraph right away.

In fact, I've found that many people don't even KNOW they're guilty of editing while writing. They tell me they're just "rereading" to figure out what they want to say next. But here's the big clue: If you ever find yourself casting any sort of *judgement* on what you've written — as in, "that was badly written," or, "I should be able to do better than that," or "I need some more interesting words in that sentence," — you are editing.

It's a bad habit to fall into because the more you try to edit, the less you'll be able to write. This is because different parts of our brains are structured to do different things. One part of our brain — found in the prefrontal cortex — is very linear and logical. That's the part you want to use for *editing*.

But a *different* part of our brain is creative — and that's the part you want to use for *writing*. Scientists haven't totally nailed down precisely where our creative brains lie, but they do know creativity draws from *multiple* brain networks found on both the left and right sides.

So, here's the heart of the challenge: Western society *rewards* us for using our linear logical brains. That's how we get good marks in school and good reviews from bosses and clients. Most of us feel really *comfortable* using the linear logical part of our brain.

But it's not very good at writing! It finds writing hard and tedious. People who write with this part of their brain might be inclined to say, "Writing is when you stare at the screen until *beads of blood* form on your forehead."

And here's another problem — if you edit *while* you're writing, you're editing at the *worst possible time.* Think about it: You've done the research. You've done all the thinking and planning. You've even done the writing, for goodness' sake! All of this work makes you maximally different from your readers. You KNOW too much! You don't yet have the *perspective* to be a good editor. Editing is a job you should do later, *after* you've had a break.

Many of us end up editing while we write for YEARS. I was 46 years old before I managed to break the habit. So, let me give you a tip that worked for me and has worked for many of my clients as well.

I'm going to assume that you're writing in Microsoft Word, but if you're using Google Docs, or even Scrivener, you can still follow the same steps.

At the top of your computer screen, there's a spot where you choose the typeface. (If you're having difficulty visualizing any of this, see **here** for a brief video demonstration.) I like to write in Calibri. Then, next to that, there's another spot where you can select the point size. The pre-sets allow you to go from a small of 5 pt. type to a large of 72. But for my purposes, 5 pt. is a little bit too large. So, I manually turn it into 3 pt. type.

Can you actually read 3 pt. type? No, of course not. And that's really good news .... Because if you can't read it, you can't edit it.

Start writing in 3 pt. type and you'll *immediately* be able to break the habit of editing while you write. It won't feel comfortable right away, but give it at least two weeks and you'll be fine.

Once you break this habit, you'll get two big benefits: the quality of your work will improve, and you'll also make the act of writing a whole bunch more fun.

2. Make your time commitment small... so small it's embarrassing

Are you a keener who resolves to write for four hours a day? How's that working out for you?

If you're anything like my clients, it's a bit of a disaster. Why? It's turning you into a procrastinator! Think about it: Four hours even *sounds* daunting. Overwhelming. It also requires a lot of prep.

You need to be well fed, first. Your eyes can't be tired. You'll also want plenty of coffee, tea, soda, or water. And your laptop had better be fully charged. You need to get all major interruptions out of the way (whether that's calls from your boss or questions from your clients). Then, get ready for the existential dread to creep in. What's it going to be like to sit in that chair for four hours? Isn't your back going to hurt? Hey, maybe you need to do some exercises before you get started. (Another delaying mechanism, even if it's one that's hard to criticize.) Then, before you know it, there aren't even four hours remaining in your work day.

But guess what? Even three hours is too much. Still too daunting. So are two hours. And so is one hour.

You need to start *smaller* than that. Like running or lifting weights, writing is a job that requires *conditioning*. You wouldn't run a marathon if you hadn't trained first. Nor should you write for any more than 30 minutes if you're not in good writing shape first. If you start with a goal that's too big, you're likely to fail, and that's going to make you feel bad about yourself. Which will only make writing even harder tomorrow.

For most people, I suggest starting with **no more than 15 minutes**. I know, I know. That's not very much time. But you'll be surprised by how many words you can produce if you know the goal is really small. And when you hit 15 minutes, STOP, even if you feel like writing more. Even if you're inspired and on a roll. Why? Successful writers show up to work *every day*. They do a little bit and then they stop. They don't depend on One Big Performance. They build a *habit* that lets them give a modest performance — every day.

To become that type of writer, you need to leave yourself *wanting* to write more. Ernest Hemingway turned this strategy into a fine art. He'd stop himself in the middle of a sentence so that it was extra easy to pick up the next day.

If 15 minutes sounds too challenging for you, understand that it's perfectly okay to start smaller than that. For example, if you've ever had any trauma associated with writing, reduce your writing time to somewhere between one and five minutes. I know, that's barely enough time to turn on your computer. But it's enough time to establish a habit. Make your commitment *so small* that you won't be able to talk yourself out of it.

Then, gradually, over the days, weeks and months to come, you can increase your writing time, remembering that slow and steady wins the race.

3. Do your writing first thing in the day
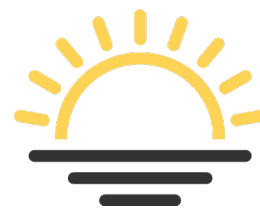
I was born a night owl and lived that way happily for more than four decades, going to bed somewhere between 1 am and 2:30 am and (reluctantly) getting up at 8 am on weekdays. Then, against all odds, I turned into a morning lark overnight. I wasn't deliberately trying to alter my sleep habits; the change happened with no conscious effort on my part. To be honest, I was a little bit annoyed when I lost my night-owlish ways.

That said, I could suddenly see how the world has been *designed* to suit morning larks. If you wake up early, the world sees you as more disciplined and harder working, even though this is merely an accident of biology. Work and school start early in the day, catering to the habits of larks and punishing all other types of birds.

But regardless of your sleeping habits, I recommend that you try to write for at least five to 15 minutes every morning. Here's why:

- If you write *before* meetings and phone calls start, you'll have some good, clear, uninterrupted time.
- If you write *before* engaging in harmful self-negotiation (e.g.: "I need to write at 10 am," followed by "I need to write at 11 am," followed by "I need to write at noon" etc.), you'll be less likely to procrastinate.
- If you write *before* doing anything else, you'll feel accomplished and rewarded, and that will help you do well in all your other tasks that day.
- If you write *before* things start to go wrong in your day — as they inevitably will — you'll be in a better mood and be more successful with your writing.
- If you write *before* doing anything else (*especially* checking email or mindlessly scrolling news feeds), you'll preserve your energy for more important and rewarding tasks.

I'm NOT suggesting you short-change your sleep in order to write. No getting up at 4:30 or 5 am! When I say "first thing in the day," I mean shortly after the time you *normally* wake up.

If your mornings are already spoken for — with feeding kids, getting exercise or walking the dog — then write at the first available opportunity. Just try really hard to make it well before 1 pm.

Your Next Steps

Are there other things you could do to make writing easier and faster? Of course! But I picked these three strategies because they will yield big results quickly.

But don't be fooled by their simplicity. These techniques may sound "too easy," but they work. And they work fast.

So, don't wait! Commit to putting at least one of them into practice **today**.

And to get more ideas, tips and strategies for writing faster, better, visit
www.publicationcoach.com

Happy writing!

Daphne

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