

CWA- Stop Procrastinating Soon

(written by Maryjean Ballner, presented by Linda Kay Hardie)

Especially since it generally causes distress, why procrastinate?

- a. Usually fear-based- not knowing where to start, how to do a task,
- b. Some people work better under pressure, but... is it worth the aggravation caused by tight deadlines.

If you're stuck, remember:

- c. Remember, usually the ego is involved: 'It's not good enough,' 'I'm not a real writer,' 'This is junk.' Read 'The Artist's Way' by Christine Cameron for inspiration.
- d. *** Remember your 'Primary Purpose' – to educate and help others. Concentrating on this can relieve the egoistic need for perfection and extreme self-satisfaction that can be crippling.

Finishing on time or ahead of schedule allows you to:

- e. revise, correct
- f. feel good to be on or ahead of schedule
- g. relax instead of crunching

What's necessary? To plan and prioritize

- h. Don't globalize, compartmentalize – 'Reduce to the Ridiculous' 'By the yard, it's hard, by the inch, it's a cinch.'

Give yourself frequent breaks – usually the maximum time for non-stop efficiency is about 45 minutes – Take time to **Sharpen the Saw**

- i. Set a timer and try it in 10 minute increments- see how much can get done in that time

What's your best time of the day? Schedule yourself around it. Don't call a night owl at 8 a.m., and an early bird may be less efficient at 8 p.m.

Daily 'To Do' List- make it S.M.A.R.T. – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic,

Timely

- j. Better to have 3 items and *get them done* than have 20 and still be writing your list by mid-afternoon.
- k. List in order of Priority- A, B, C, -- then A1, A2, A3, B1, C1, C3.
 - i. 'A'- usually has a financial consequence, is urgent and important – paying a bill
 - ii. 'B' – is necessary –
 - iii. 'C' – re-writing your cookbook, or, in July, preparing your Christmas card list.
- l. Avoid 'cherry-picking'- doing all the easy 'C's'- but it may be necessary to start with one or two to overcome inertia.
- m. Treat yourself to a 'C' after a particularly tough 'A.'
- n. Treat yourself – by Time or by Task – twice a month, or after an assignment is accomplished. Get monthly or bimonthly massages or house cleanings.

Work by Time or Task:

- o. By Time: work in 15, 30 or 45 minute segments
- p. By Task: write an outline, or call one person to interview, write one page, write your bio.

Partner up: encourages each other, and adds accountability to someone in addition to an editor. Call once a week, email once a day, find a comrade and help each other accomplish.

Actual Writing:

- q. Synonyms – make a list of synonyms for subjects you’re working on- cat, feline, mouser. Learn to use the keys ‘Shift + f7’ for the thesaurus.
- r. “It’s easier to edit than to create.” – one of Dan Poynter’s classic lines. It’s true and it works.
- s. Discover if you can type, or write then type. If you type, learn the shortcuts, and if you write, create your own shorthand abbreviations- instead of writing ‘cat,’ simply write ‘c’.
- t. Use a blank notebook to accumulate information about each article; get these for 10 cents each during August sales, and all info is in one place.
- u. Don’t correct every typo as you go along. Use ‘Auto-Correct’ to avoid repeating the same misspellings.
- v. There’s a difference between brainstorming, writing, editing and fine-tuning. Appreciate them and use them accordingly.

Background music: Perhaps music encourages or inspires you. Try gentle songs, instrumental only – no wordy distractions, or energetic rock. If music is a valuable enhancement to your work, invest in a decent stereo – a partial business tax deduction.

Since writing can be so isolating...

- w. Get out of your house! Make sure you don’t stay inside all day.
- x. Schedule free time and fun time. Sitting down to write an entire article in one day sets you up for disappointment and probable failure.
- y. *Talk with other people – non CWA/DWAA folks – social (brief) phone calls keep you from seclusion*
- z. Exercise! Physical workouts augment mental processes
- aa. Volunteer: at an animal shelter, as an usher at your town’s artistic venues. Babysitting a two year old for a few hours gives the mother a break and gives you the wondrous perception of the world through a child’s eyes.

Procrastination and Clutter are often best friends, teaming up against even the best intentioned writer. Keep your work area clear, and if necessary, get someone to help you.

Distractions to Avoid:

- bb. Email – one of the worst – spend 1st hour on your project BEFORE you even open email.
- cc. Email: work with your sound ‘off’ to avoid the Pavlovian response of looking at every incoming message.
- dd. Email: Unless you’re writing and answering a specific person, answer twice a day *only* – once in the morning and again in the afternoon.
- ee. Telephone: either shut it off, or screen calls and answer *only* what’s truly important
- ff. Avoid any task other than the one at hand, like cleaning out the litter box twice in an hour.