

JUMP START  
YOUR WRITING  
HABIT

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BLACK

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# **Jump Start Your Writing Habit**

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*Jump Start Your Writing Habit*

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## Introduction

For as long as I can remember, the written word has been my preferred way of communicating. A lifelong reader, I didn't realize writing would be my career until several years into my marriage with two toddlers running circles around me. Writing became my quiet time, my rejuvenation at the end of long days. Eventually, I discovered I had a knack for writing novels and I've pursued career as a published author ever since.

I believe writing can empower us all, whether we simply maintain a journal, write to augment our business, or write as a full-time career. There is a wonderful synergy that occurs when you let your thoughts become tangible words and sentences and ideas that grow and build on the page. In school, you learned facts and concepts, were informed and entertained by reading and being the writer will illuminate wonderful lessons about your life experiences and what you have to give back to others.

As you might have guessed from the title, this guide is designed to help you jump start your writing habit. The most valuable thing I've learned during my fifteen-plus years in this business is how important it is to put an emphasis on the writing itself.

Jim Rohn said, "*The thing that is easy to do is the thing that is easy not to do.*" If you're interested in developing writing skills for your business or *making* writing your primary business chances are some aspect of writing is comfortable or easy for you. That makes it the thing that's easy to take for granted, the thing that's easy to push to the bottom of the to-do list. This guide can help you change your outlook and how you prioritize.

If you're in the opposite camp and struggle to get words on the page at all, this guide is just what you need to create a positive writing habit that will enhance your professional or personal journey.

## Carve Out The Time

The most common obstacle I hear to developing a writing habit is a lack of *time*. Not a lack of desire, nor a lack of ideas, but a lack of time. As the most precious commodity - once spent we can't get time back - we need to invest our time wisely.

You don't need hours or days blocked out to create a writing habit that will pay off big for you. Sure, it would be nice, but it isn't necessary. And with today's devices, you can make the most of every spare minute.

First, look at your schedule and see when you have small pockets of time. Even ten minute sprints can make a difference in developing a writing habit. When I started out, I tried getting up a half hour earlier than the rest of my family. It didn't work for me, as I was blessed with a daughter who woke up when I did, no matter the time or my gift for stealth. She had some bizarre radar and when she toddled out of her room, I'd spend half of my bonus time snuggling with her. Definitely great moments and memories, but not great writing time.

Staying up later worked better for me. As did working out a deal with my husband to carve out a smidge of time from the weekends so I could indulge my love of words and build a habit and relationship with my writing.

If you have a commute to or from work, you can leverage that time into a writing habit. There are plenty of apps and devices to make this an ideal solution to work on drafts or just start a journal. You could try sending emails to yourself and organize them into a document each day or week. As the queen (or addict) of sticky notes, I love the sticky note apps on my phone that I can sync into a cloud storage folder or send to myself later by email.

Do you take a lunch break at work? Is there a quiet spot you go to eat and recharge for the afternoon? Take a notebook or device with you and write! A friend of mine takes her lunch in her car on nice days just so she doesn't get interrupted by others at the office. I'm not suggesting you become completely anti-social, but a couple of days a week can really add up quickly and turn into a helpful writing habit.

No quiet? No problem. That's why earbuds were invented, right? You can crank up some inspiring tunes and let your muse flow into the notebook or app of choice.

Delegate and delay are two more savvy strategies for carving out writing time. Your partner or kids can manage dinner and/or the cleanup routine a couple nights each week, giving you some bonus time to write. And if you record your favorite television show you can use it as a

reward when your words are in for the day. That particular delay gets bonus points in my book because then you can watch the show and skip the commercials.

It is absolutely okay to ask for both the help and space you need to jump start your writing habit. The benefits of writing are huge - even if you start with a something along the lines of a gratitude journal or idea generator.

My husband didn't know he married an author, because writing books wasn't on my radar at the time. Sure my grandmother wrote short stories and plays, along with weekly letters that kept us all connected, but me writing a book seemed ludicrous.

I reconnected with my inner writer when I discovered stories and notes and silliness in some old records from my school days. My journey began with poetry that celebrated my faith and the joys of being a mom. Those poems grew, pouring out of me when the house was quiet at night until some became published in various outlets, others were collected into books, and still others developed into marketing materials.

Writing has taken me on an amazing journey since those early days and I've seen it transform others too. So give it a try! Commit to the effort of carving out writing time. When you do, your writing time will reward you by illuminating and inspiring your goals and dreams.

## Find Your Creative Zone

The next step on jump starting your new writing habit is to learn when you're best at different types of writing and use that to your advantage.

The majority of my writing efforts and contracts revolve around creating fiction for the purpose of entertaining readers and offering a few hours of an adventurous escape with the promise of a happy ending. It's what I enjoy reading for my own recharge time, which means the pacing and delivery comes more naturally.

Most of the time my books are drafted within six to eight weeks, but writing is my day job. It took me a long time to become that efficient. Many authors work faster, others slower. It's an individual sport. Everyone who writes has a slightly different way of getting it done. Part of productivity stems from the type of writing, but most of it comes from discipline and habit.

Over the years, I've learned I'm best at drafting fiction over several hours from mid-morning until late afternoon. Non-fiction often comes better to me in the evenings or later at night. Yes, it's all writing, but the energy I need for those tasks is vastly different. It probably shouldn't have been a shock to me, but it was. It's all about trial and error to find what works for you. Trust me that working within the specific ebbs and flows of your daily schedule and energy will make it easier to create and maintain the habit of writing.

When you're starting out, I recommend you focus on one topic or interest with your writing - *if* you know what that is. If you're not sure about what you want to write, you need to give yourself the grace and time to find out. Let the words fly, follow all those ideas and thoughts until you find what captivates you and keeps you coming back to the page day in and day out.

Test out different writing times and places to discover what pockets of time work best for the content you want to create. If you only have one pocket of time in your day or week to work with, that's okay! The key to making the most of that time is being able to quickly put yourself in the mood to write.

Setting the mood can involve music or white noise, with or without earbuds or a few minutes of deep breathing. You might try a special scent from an essential oil diffuser, a sachet, or a candle. Brew a cup of coffee or tea and let the warmth and aroma of the beverage focus your thoughts. Again, trial and error. Be brave, just be present and write.

Once you've found your time and had some success, that rewarding sensation becomes the inspiration to repeat the process again and again. That joy is the best part of a writing habit and it can be yours!

## Map It Out

Just as having a map or navigation app is a helpful tool when you're on a road trip, having a map for your writing will make you more effective from day one. With my fiction, I seek to entertain, to give others the escape I enjoy from reading. With non-fiction, it's all about sharing my expertise to inform and inspire others. Having a plan or map empowers me in both efforts.

Start your roadmap by taking a bit of time, over a cup of coffee (or wine) and list out all the reasons you want to write. Is there a specific article or story you are chomping at the bit to tell? If you answered yes, the next question you'll need to answer is why you want to tell it. That will give your writing time not only a clear topic, but a concise purpose to fuel the effort.

Don't sweat it if you're not sure about what you want to write. The best thing is to dive into the words and see where they lead you. In this situation, your map comes during or even after the writing. When I write fiction without an outline (it still happens occasionally), I make brief notes at the end of each session about what I added and what needs to come next. That makes it easier for me to sink into the story world or project the next day.

The general road map for my writing sessions, fiction or non-fiction, looks like this:

1) Brain dump. This is a brief five or ten minute journal time to declutter my mind and warm up my hands.

2) Visualization. I take another five minutes to 'see' what I want to write. I pause to consider the mood, the setting or topic, the characters or details, and how I want my readers to feel and react to the scene or information.

3) Write. I put my hands on the keyboard and let the story or article come to me.

It sounds easy, but I've had more than fifteen years of tweaking the system that works best for me. That's one of the greatest things about writing, is that our individual process can be so effective. You can learn from me without having to do it my way. You can apply what resonates with you to empower your writing journey.

No, coffee isn't on that list, but it is a critical part of my process, especially in the mornings.

Neither is perfection. It is absolutely imperative that you ditch the idea of creating things perfectly the first time around in the draft stage. Polishing your ideas comes later, once you have the words to work with. This idea of perfection is a hang up that hampers your process. It limits you and one benefit of a writing habit is clearing away those old limitations and letting yourself shine.

While writing and rewriting can frustrate people who tend to be impatient (like me), let me assure you that an established writing habit makes it easier. First, I always have something new that I'm working on in a draft, so I get that immediate high of progress every day. Then, with every editing or revision pass, I learn more about the work, the characters or the message so I can make the final book better for the reader.

The roadmaps I create for specific writing projects often start with a fast list of ideas, many not even coherent enough to qualify as bullet points. As I mull over what I know or have learned about those various ideas, the concepts start to gel with topic lines, and later expansion points.

That eventually grows into a cohesive flow of topics until I have my draft complete. Then I work with beta readers and editors to shape the words into an ideal reader experience.

Keep in mind this quote from Belva Davis, "*Don't be afraid of the space between your dreams and reality. If you can dream it, you can make it so.*" The roadmap is your guide, but what you learn as you write might take you on an occasional detour. Don't be afraid of that either. If your muse or intuition makes a suggestion, follow it for a time. Discovery is a wonderful bonus element of a writing habit.

We all feel fabulous when we get where we're going, right? So too, the last part of your roadmap should involve the celebration of reaching your destination. The journey is exciting, but reaching a milestone, whether that's a finished novel, a professional book, blog content, or a clear vision of how to use your writing, is an accomplishment.

Writing well is all about the habit and perseverance, with a lot of learning, self-discovery and a few speed bumps along the way. Take the time to reward yourself for executing a feat most people won't dare - taking an idea and turning it into something it tangible that can touch or teach others.

## Small Steps Mean Big Results

Another detail that often prevents people from writing is the myth that books are overwhelming mountains. It's true an epic fantasy adventure series takes more time to plan, write, edit, and publish than a freelance article or a report like this one, but I'll share a secret with you...

Both the epic adventure and this report were written the same way - one word at a time.

From idea to finished product, you can make your writing goal a reality with perseverance and small, effective steps on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. It sounds simple, but I know exactly how challenging it can be.

Even with more than 25 novels to my credit, I had stage fright during a new contract. Freaking out about the pacing of a 70,000 word count had handcuffed my process. Desperate, I finally sucked it up and reached out to a friend of mine who writes for the same publisher. After ticking through the boxes about where I was and what my real issues were, she asked me if considering it a 68,000 word count story made it easier.

Short answer? Yes. Strange as it sounds, just thinking of the story a smidge shorter made a huge difference. It shifted my perspective. (The book came in around 73,000 words after the final revisions, by the way.)

Think of your writing project in smaller increments and you'll find yourself hitting those milestones and feeling great about your progress. If it's an article, start with topic sentences or bullet points. If it's a novel, start with a sentence or mood, maybe the location and time of each scene. Then build and layer, one word, sentence, paragraph at a time.

Taking ten minutes each day for a gratitude journal or a brainstorming session can pay big dividends, personally and professionally. One of the best suggestions I ever learned was the *100 x 100 challenge*. You commit to writing 100 words daily for 100 days straight. If you miss a day you start the count over.

At the end of that 100 day effort, assuming you were writing on one topic, you'd have a minimum of 10,000 words in a rough draft! That is plenty to work with to create a tight, targeted guide for your business. Or, if you're writing fiction, that effort would give you 20% of the average novel. Think about that for a minute. Let it sink in.

Are you getting excited about the potential? Writing 100 words each day can add up quickly. On top of those 10,000 words to build on or work with, you'd also have a new writing habit that will serve you well as you move forward.

When you've created a consistent, positive writing habit you'll know several things about your process. You'll know how long it takes you to create those hundred words. You'll know what you enjoy writing. And you'll know what you need to adjust about your production during an unexpected crunch time or crisis.

If you were ever involved with sports you've probably heard this quote from Vince Lombardi, "*Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.*" He's right. If you practice something wrong, you're not making the right progress toward your goal. For writing it's better to paraphrase it this way, "Occasional practice does not make a writer productive. Only consistent practice makes a writer productive."

Don't worry and don't waste time beating yourself up for small daily word counts. As you can see in the example above, consistent efforts pay off. Another key reward of even the most minimal daily writing means you're in touch with your creativity and writing every day and it is easier to maintain your progress and momentum.

## **A Final Thought**

Creating a healthy writing habit is primarily a solo effort, but you don't ever need to feel alone. Plenty of authors have gone before, blazing trails to encourage and motivate you to reach for *your* dream. This brief guide is one way for me to give back to the writing community much the way my mentors reached back and inspired me along the way.

For more inspiration and advice on writing, visit [ReganBlack.com/for-writers](https://ReganBlack.com/for-writers) and subscribe to the email newsletter or pick up another title to empower your ongoing journey.

I wish you the very best on your writing adventure!

~Regan

## About The Author

Regan Black, a USA Today bestselling author, writes award-winning, action-packed romantic suspense, paranormal adventure, and urban fantasy novels, as well as informative non-fiction books infused with humor and inspiration.

Raised in the Midwest and California, she currently makes her home with her family, their adopted greyhound, two arrogant cats, and a quirky finch in the South Carolina Lowcountry where the rich blend of legend, romance, and history fuels her imagination.

You can visit her online anytime at [www.ReganBlack.com](http://www.ReganBlack.com)

Click [here](#) to subscribe to Regan's fan newsletter for book release updates, insider access, monthly prizes, and more! And stay connected online through

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