

# You DO have the Time to Write

## Getting Rid of the Big Excuse

### Introduction

Have you ever said, “I would like to write a novel (or my memoirs, poetry, nonfiction book, magazine articles) but I just don’t have the time.”

I hope you will take what I have to say next in the spirit in which I say it:

## Balderdash

I have taught writing for more than 30 years. I have heard this from many of my students. At first, I was understanding. Frankly, even though I was the teacher, I often felt the same way. After all, we all have busy lives. Between our jobs, family responsibilities, hobbies, commitments at church or charitable groups, clubs, etc., we feel like we’re on a dead run all day long.

Then I realized I have as much time in my day as Stephen King or Nora Roberts or James Patterson. They have busy lives like me. They may be busy with other things, but they are busy. They have the same amount of time I do – twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

The question isn’t about how much time I have, but how I use it. We will discuss many time management techniques, but all of them come down to one very important fact. The time I have available is dictated by the choices I make. So is yours. If you don’t have the time to write, it is because of choices you are making.

I don’t mean for this to sound harsh, but this is true. I’m on several email discussion lists for writers. I also follow #amwriting and #nanowrimo on Twitter. I have many writer friends on Facebook. How many times have I seen posts in all those venues with writers bemoaning the fact that they don’t have the time to write. Some will write one hundred word posts about it.

Somehow they found the time to write a post, status update or tweet about not having the time to write.

On one accountability list where we set goals for our writing and report in daily about our progress, we created a Ten-Word-A-Day Club. Before anyone writes a post saying, “I didn’t have time today to do any writing,” they are to write ten words on their novels. If they have enough

time to report they didn't have time to write, they at least have enough time to write one sentence for their work in progress.

Since we started the Ten-Word-A-Day club, several people have reported that they would sit down to write their ten words and end up writing many more. They discovered they did have the time to write AFTER they began writing!

### **Attitude First**

Taking control of your time involves making changes in your life. It means getting rid of some old habits. It means creating some new ones. Some of the things I will mention in this book may sound crazy, or undoable. Some may sound harsh. However, before you reject a suggestion out of hand, take the time to think about it. This book is based on more than 30 years of experience teaching writing and time management techniques. These are not just some ideas I came up with over time. These are proven techniques for improving your productivity as a writer. I suggest that you try each of these even if you don't think they will work.

### *Commitment to Change*

First, you need to be committed to changing the way you do things. Obviously, the way you have been approaching time management hasn't worked, or you wouldn't have bought this book. Buying this book is a good first step. Reading it is a good second step. However, the final step is the hardest – applying its principals to your life.

Many of us struggle with change. Consider the outrage every time Facebook changes its design. A year later another change comes, and the same people who complained about the old design are now championing it not wanting it to change. It's a type of knee-jerk response for many of us to resist change. Change isn't easy, but it is necessary if you want to improve your life. So, commit today to make at least one of the changes suggested in this book.

### *Try Everything Once*

I am a picky eater. There are things I like and things I don't like. If I don't like it, I won't eat it. When I was a kid, my mother didn't force me to eat things I didn't like, but she did make a deal with me. She said, I could choose not to eat something, but I had to try it first.

I'm going to ask the same thing of you. Honestly, every tip in this book won't fit into your lifestyle or work for you. However, you won't know that for certain until you try it. I didn't think I'd like cream of broccoli soup, but I tried it, and now it's one of my favorites.

### *Consistency.*

I watched a Ken Burns documentary about the Lewis and Clark expedition. One of the commentators noted that they averaged about 20 miles a day. Think about that for a moment. They crossed half a continent and returned averaging just 20 miles a day. Their secret – They kept moving forward.

Some people aim for the big numbers in their writing. They think they had a good day if they write 3000 words, but if they don't "have time" to write that same amount the next day, they write nothing. By the end of the week, they have 3000 words written. However, if they had written 500 words (or about two double-spaced typewritten pages) a day every day that week, they would have had 3500.

You can't just apply a time-saving technique once. You have to be willing to make it a part of your daily routine. Change comes through the consistent application of new ways of doing things.

### *Keep your Eyes on the Prize*

We will talk a lot about priorities. If writing is a true priority for you, then consider the changes you need to make as investments in your literary future. Keep in mind that book, novel, magazine article or whatever you want to write in mind. You might even make up a cover for your book, print it out and put it on the wall of your office as a reminder of what you want to accomplish.

Nothing motivates change more strongly than a clear picture of what that change will bring.

So, let's get started by finding out how you are already using your time.