



DECEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER WRITERS TIP

“Write What You’d **Like** to Know:”

We’ve all heard the saying, “Write What You Know,” but that’s a bit limiting, don’t you think? I always say, “Write what you’d **LIKE** to know.” The world is full of information and opportunity. Just because you haven’t personally experienced what you’d like to write about doesn’t mean you can’t research, inquire and explore your way to the knowledge you need to write with authority. Trust your imagination to fill in the rest and enjoy learning something new!

This Month’s Question:

A couple of people have commented to me in the past month that for those who make their living writing for technical, commercial or journalistic markets (or those who have jobs that require sitting at a computer all day), it’s often hard to find the energy and stamina to work on creative writing as well. Here are my suggestions for dealing with this dilemma:

1. Get up an hour earlier: If you start out your day with creative writing, your thoughts might not have turned to other work yet and your energy level may be higher. Think of it this way – your paid work *will* get done because it has to, so if you prioritize your creative writing at the end of the day, you’ll spend the rest of the day making sure your paid work gets done.
2. Take writing retreats: During these weekend or week-long writing getaways, don’t take your “real” work with you. Focus only on your creative writing. You’ll be amazed how much you can get done if you really focus, and by taking some time off, you won’t put additional stress on your body each day sitting at the computer even after your paid work is done.
3. Spend one day a week on your creative writing only: If you work a job that requires you to be there Monday through Friday, plan on spending Saturday mornings on your creative work. There is no hard and fast rule that a creative writer has to write every day. Even writing once a week will move you forward. If your job allows you to set your own hours, you can choose one day a week to work only on your book or stories.
4. Raise your rates: As one of my associates pointed out, if she’s going to find time for her creative work, she needs to raise her rates for her professional writing. If she raises her rates, she can take fewer paying jobs, which will allow more time for her creative projects.
5. Vary your position: It’s exhausting to sit at a computer all day and hard on our hands, neck and arms. Try varying your position when you work on your creative work. Put your computer on a counter so you have to stand while you type. Critique your story as you ride an exercise bike. Tape record your ideas as you go for a walk. Try writing and revising in longhand and returning only to your computer when you are ready to type in the final manuscript.

6. Find a support system: Belonging to a writers' group, signing up for an ongoing class or connecting with a writing buddy holds you accountable to getting your creative writing done, regardless of the demands of your day job.

If you have any other suggestions for this common problem, send them to me!