



## Create the Conditions for Productive Writing

### Environment

- Establish a regular, appealing place in which you do all serious writing.
- Do not write in a place that you feel you must clean before you can write.
- Minimize noisy distractions and temptations to multi-task.
- Limit social interactions during writing.
- Enlist another writer to join you for mutual quiet periods of work.

### Scheduling and Planning

- Make writing a regular activity, regardless of mood or readiness. Do not wait for inspiration.
- Observe what times of day and other conditions let you be most productive (log your writing for a week). Schedule regular writing sessions for the times when you are most alert and energetic.
- Set a start time AND an end time for each writing session.
- Break large projects into manageable pieces: Set SMART goals at each session (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). Periodically review how these small goals contribute to the big picture.
- Keep a writing log to track progress toward your goals, obstacles you have faced, and habits you are developing. Periodically re-assess how your small goals are moving you toward the larger goals.
- When you are writing, keep a notebook handy to record the off-topic ideas, obligations, and reminders that try to interrupt you when you work.
- Reward yourself when you meet important goals and share your progress with supportive peers.

### Self-Care

- In advance, learn strategies and plan to deal with likely future obstacles such as procrastination, writing blocks, flu, hard drive crash, etc.
- Manage stress, stay balanced. Get enough sleep, get it regularly. Eat healthy food. Know what is important to you and say no to things that aren't high priorities. Allow yourself to refill your well when you need to.
- Seek support when and where you need it, whether from your advisor, the Writing Center, the Library, the Counseling Center, or fellow writers. Scholarship is challenging, and writing need not be a solitary struggle.

### Sources

- Robert Boice, *How Writers Journey to Comfort and Fluency* (1994)
- Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* (1998)
- Charles Lipton, *How to Write a BA Thesis* (2005)