

# Write Angles by Heather Wright

T. S. Eliot wrote, "April is the cruelest month." He was wrong. I think it's September. Not because school is awful and I don't like going—it isn't and I do—but because September brings the end to the season when I have time to write every day. Come September, I have to work very hard to nurture the writer in me. Here are eight tricks, thoughts, and suggestions for keeping your writer in creative gear when the demands of the rest of your life try to make that impossible.



✍️ Rethink what you really need to be a writer. At the most basic level you need a pencil and paper and the will to apply one to the other for a period of time. You don't need a computer to write the first draft of anything. If you need it, then you have to be in the same room with it. And that means you can't write anywhere else or in any other way. Think about how limiting that is. When time to write is so scarce, limiting yourself to one writing location can make it nearly impossible to write at all.

🕒 Promise yourself writing time and make a space for it in your life every day. This can be a difficult promise to keep but it can be done. I know this may be a dreadful concept but consider setting the alarm for an earlier time and hitting the page before the rest of your day begins to crowd in. Dorothea Brande, author of *Becoming a Writer* recommends a half-hour of writing in the morning right after you wake up and before you talk to anyone or even read. "...[What] you are actually doing is training yourself, in the twilight zone between sleep and the full waking state, simply to write."

Like any muscle, the writing one needs regular exercise, too.

🕒 Give yourself a twenty-minute gift of writing time. Don't tell yourself that there's no point in starting because you don't have a clear three hours to write. Inspiration will find you if you're on the bus, waiting for the movie to start, or the dentist to call you in. If you're meeting a friend for coffee, get there twenty minutes early and take your notebook. Those twenty-minute blocks add up and, think about it, writing for twenty minutes is better than not writing at all.

⊕ Set a goal; a weekly one works best. You have seven days to write five pages or two thousand words. If you're a natural born procrastinator, you need to break your goal down into small daily chunks. And be easy on yourself if you don't make every personal writing deadline. Remember, one chocolate bar doesn't end a diet. You have a lot in your life right now. Congratulate yourself on what you did do because each page you filled got you closer to your goal. And there's always another day, or another

**Hello School! Goodbye Writing?**

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twenty-minute gift you can give to yourself.

☺ Never stop thinking of yourself as a writer. When you wake up, think about what you will do for the writer today. Eavesdrop on a conversation and record one really good line? Read great writing? Write down three unrelated words and think of a story that will connect them? Add a paragraph to your current piece? Do some research? Edit a page? Buy a new pencil? Use the word 'writer' to define yourself and you will honour your commitment to the writer as you do to the friend, parent, sibling, coach, team mate, and teacher who also need your attention every day.

🦋 Lose the perfectionist. Give yourself permission to write a first draft that is a mess. Just get the words down. They don't have to be the words that end up in the final story. That's what second drafts--and thirds--are for. Anne Lammot, author of *Bird by Bird*, says, "The first draft is the child's draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp all over the place, knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later. You just let this

childlike part of you channel whatever voices and visions come through and onto the page...because there may be something great in those six crazy pages that you would never have gotten to by more rational, grown-up means." If Anne Lammot's advice doesn't connect to you, consider Miss Frizzle's: "Take chances, make mistakes, and get messy!"

📖 Have more than one story or poem on the go. That way, you will always have something to write, even if one idea is dead or your inspiration for it is. Remember, too, that you don't have to write a story or a poem in order. If you have a clear idea of how a scene or description or a stanza will work later on, write it now and connect it later. But write.

✂ The best advice: Start now!

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