STORYADAY

Jumpstart Your Writing

When it's hard to get to work, you've probably become disconnected from the importance your writing—or this work—holds for you.

If you are having trouble making time for your writing practice at all, it probably means you have forgotten how important writing is to your overall wellbeing. Use **Worksheet 1** to work through that and remind yourself that making time and saving energy for your writing is far from selfish, frivolous, or optional.

If you are stalling or procrastinating on a particular project, **Worksheet 2** will help you reconnect with why you wanted to create it in the first place, and remind you fo the rewards available to you during the writing and when it is finished.

I've been working with writers since 1998, and after all this time I have seen that what keeps people from being creative, prolific, and fulfilled, as writers, is never a lack of skills. It's always a mindset issue.

Use these worksheets as often as you need to, to remind yourself of the benefits—to you and the people in your life—of taking your writing seriously.

People often say that motivation doesn't last.
Well, neither does bathing – that's why we recommend it daily.
—Zig Ziglar

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Worksheet 1: Prioritize Your Writing Practice

What are you feeling right now? (The Bad)

Included things like physical feelings and urges, voices you hear in your head, activities you do to distract yourself (probably unhealthy, but not always)

How do you feel when you are writing regularly (The Good)

Include things like noticing you're more decisive about other things, that you have more time for other people, that it's easier to find connections and joy

Does it matter if the writing is brilliant, or does this effect kick if the writing quality is 'meh'?

(be honest)

What would it do to your daily life if you felt The Good, more often than The Bad?

What would you be able to do? Who would you be able to help/serve better? What would it do for your earning potential? Your health? Your relationships? Feel free to draw outsized conclusions here, visions of potential futures that excites you

Is writing ‘unpublishable’ works a waste of time?

Imagine you were going to run a marathon, or sit the bar exam, or play a concerto at Carnegie Hall. What would happen if you turned up, having done no preparation? Were all those hours of running, revising, or music-played-alone, wasted? What thoughts run through your head when you think of writing for practice?

What is a short, positive message about practice, that you can install in your brain to replace the ‘wasted time lie?

It might be something like”Practice leads to progress” or “The world’s best performers work on the fundamentals, every day” or “No words are ever wasted”

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Worksheet 2: Project Jumpstart

What was the Spark for this project?

Why did you start writing it? What was the ‘oo, that’s cool’ idea or what popped into your head the first time you really felt it start to come together as an idea?

Why Is It Important To You?

What would it mean to finish and polish this piece? What would it do for your self-confidence? What skills might you learn while finishing it? What opportunities might it open up for you? What other projects would it free you up to play with?

Who Else Could It Impact, And How?

Allow yourself to dream big here. Imagine your project was guaranteed to succeed, find an audience, and become a huge smash hit. What would the outcome be for other people?

People You Know

Are you easier to live with when you're writing? Could this help a specific person you know see the world in a new way? Could completing this project lead to a ripple-effect (relationships, financial, emotional) for your loved ones?

People You Don't Know

Remember books, stories, and performances that affected you strongly. What if your work could have that effect on a stranger? What might it mean to them? Again, dream big!

Doing hard things can be uncomfortable. Here are some questions to help you get started

What is the smallest step you could take towards starting?

Focus on a step that involves only one type of task (brainstorming, re-reading, planning, writing new words, planning outreach, reaching out, or celebrating how far you've come already)

What is a smaller first step than that?

Try to think of something that is so small you'd feel silly for not doing it, especially now that you've remembered the importance of this project to yourself, the people you love, and the wider world.

PICK ONE: 1, What is the minimum amount of time you will put in, before you're allowed to act on your discomfort and step away from your work?

Make it small enough that you can a, bear it and b, possibly exceed it by a little. I usually find 15-30 minutes is a good length of time to let the discomfort dissipate, if it's going to.

2, What intensity of work will you put in?

E.g. freewriting feels 'light' to me (sometimes it's essential, other times it feels too light, like I'm not trying hard enough). Writing a draft that's already started feels 'medium' intensity to me, but starting a new scene or story feels 'intense' - it's not just writing, it's also problem-solving and planning...

3, How many ‘reps’ will you do, today?

E.g. in our StoryADay Superstars Group Writing Sprints, we do an hour of 2x25 minute work sessions, broken up by five minute breaks before, during and after. You could do a single ‘sprint’, or you could commit to doing several. But remember to give yourself grace, if it doesn’t work out. You’re in this for the long-haul!

How will you celebrate when you complete a work session?

Note: this should be a tiny and immediate celebration like chatting to a co-worker, doing a little dance, listening to a favorite song–something that changes your state and teaches your brain to associate ‘writing’ with ‘reward’.

Wrapping Up

Now that you've reminded yourself of the importance of your writing or this project, and given yourself some tiny steps to take to get started, keep this document somewhere safe, so you can refer to it again, tomorrow.
(If you're anything like me, all today's good intentions will be forgotten by then!)

Don't skip the all-important 'celebrate' step, at the end of your writing session. This is the most powerful thing that behavioral scientist say we overlook the most, when it comes to creating repeatable, positive habits. Give your brain treats, to train its inner-puppy into behaving.

Then turn the page for some suggestions about how you can keep the momentum going.

Keep writing,

Julie Duffy
Founder & Director, StoryADay.org

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Ready to Put It Into Practice?

Try these offerings from Julie Duffy and StoryADay:

Short-Term Commitment: For a short fix, try the **3-Day Challenge** - a 3-part short story writing course disguised as a challenge. Go at your own pace, and build confidence in your ability to write short stories, with my guidance.

Perfect for: *a first taste of the StoryADay way*

Medium-Term Commitment: To reinforce good writing habits over several weeks, check out the **StoryADay Challenge Handbook** (31 short story prompts, with warm-ups and brainstorming exercises); or the **One-Story Challenge** - 30 days to your next completed draft, with a focus on mastering the "Show, Don't Tell" craft advice.

Perfect for: *a focused, time-limited push to develop your practice and skills*

A Year of Inspiration: To build a writing habit, throughout the year, subscribe to the **StoryAWeek newsletter**: 52 writing lessons and story prompts delivered to your inbox for a year.

Perfect for: *becoming more prolific in your writing practice and for building a body of work*

Ongoing Support For Your Practice: **The StoryADay Superstars group** meets throughout the year for writing dates, discussions, workshops, critique and asynchronous support through our off-social-media text-based community. You also get access to an archive of **40+ on-demand workshops** and even more workbooks like this, covering everything from inspiration to publication.

Perfect for: *people who are sick of trying to go it alone, and know a supportive community can make all the difference*