

Rules of the Road for Writers - Robert Boyce

1. Pace yourself. Work in brief, regular sessions, 10-50 minutes in length, no more than 3-4 hours a day, 5 days a week. Use a timer to help yourself keep the sessions brief, and take breaks between each.
2. Pause while writing to check for comfort. Watch for signs of impatience and rushing, particularly thoughts about needing to finish in any one session.
3. Stop when you get to the end of your time limit, preferably in the middle of something (a sentence, paragraph, argument).
4. Spend as much time pre-writing (noticing, collecting materials, taking notes, planning, outlining, making drafts) and rewriting as you do writing.
5. Spend as much time socializing around writing (talking with other writers about what you are writing) as you do writing (and spend only moderate amounts of time at either).
6. Make writing a modest, daily priority, something done routinely but not at the expense of living. Take regular breaks and avoid working when you are tired or in large, uninterrupted blocks of time.
7. Pay attention to your emotions as you are writing so as not to get caught in reactive self-talk. Watch particularly for thoughts about what you "should," "ought," or "must" be doing as a writer and recognize them as the irrationalities that they are.
8. Watch, above all, for the temptation to binge out of impatience to get something done. Remind yourself that bingeing leads to overreaction leads to depression.
9. When you share your writing with someone, listen calmly and patiently to what he or she has to say. Find something in their reaction to your work with which you can honestly agree and ask for clarification about anything that they say that you don't understand. But don't expect everyone to like what you write or to read as carefully as you would like them to.
10. Check again for any irrational thoughts about what your writing or the experience of writing "should" or "ought" to be like and dispute them. Remind yourself again of the link between strong emotions, hypomania, fatigue, and depression.
11. If you find yourself worried about not being busy/smart/productive enough, stop and do something else (like sleep) until you feel rested again.
12. Start before you feel ready. Stop before you feel done.

--Paraphrased by Rachel Fulton Brown from Robert Boice, *How Writers Journey to Comfort and Fluency: A Psychological Adventure* (Westport: Praeger, 1994)