

Tips for Increasing Writing Productivity

Circle approaches you have used in your writing process. For each one, answer the following: How has this approach been helpful to you? Under what conditions do you find it work best?

Put a star by any approaches that are intriguing to you. For each one, make notes on how you might integrate the approach into your process, or at least give it a try.

1. **Free write**—Proponents of expressivism strongly support free writing as a regular part of a writing practice. Try free writing and brainstorming your topic without restraint or emphasis on “correctness” of prose or “organization” of logic. Allowing for ten or so minutes of generative writing can be a great way to kick start projects.
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2. **Daily practice**—writers often find they are most productive and “get in their groove” if they commit to a daily writing practice or goal. Even 15 minutes a day is enough to begin chipping away at large projects.
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3. **Itemize action items**—set specific writing goals with deadlines to help break a larger project into smaller more manageable constituent parts. This “technical” approach to writing is often helpful particularly with longer projects, but can also be useful for discrete projects, like seminar papers or scholarly articles. Commit to trying to write a section at a time, rather than tackle the whole thing at once.
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4. **Talk about your writing**—sharing your writing with advisors and peers helps keep you motivated. It also puts a little pressure on you to stick to your commitments. Most importantly, it’s a great way to brainstorm and receive instant feedback on a project.
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5. **Observe your writing space**—Do you write best in crowded, noisy places? Dim or bright spaces? Are you more energized at night, or in the morning? Understanding where and when you feel most productive and committing to carving time into those spaces helps writers approach their task more confidently and consistently.
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6. **Listen up**—some writers find music helpful in facilitating “flow” in the writing process. It taps into classical rhetorical pedagogic emphasis on rhythm, repetition, and response.

Figure out which music works best and try to consistently play the same type to emphasize repetition and rhythm in your own writing.

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7. **Find a writing ritual**—writing can be very superstitious—not unlike sports. Try and figure out if you have a ritualistic approach to writing—same food items (salty or sweet?), drink, writing space, or musical soundtrack. The key is learning to be flexible if you can't reproduce the same environment each time you sit down to write.

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8. **Read successful models**—read other sample documents in the same genre to find inspiration and better understand the model to which and audience for whom you are writing.

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9. **Record your thoughts**—sometimes inspiration strikes when away from the computer. Using voice recording technology—like the phone app Smart Voice Recorder—helps you keep a log of your thoughts you can transcribe the next time you sit down to write.

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10. **Record your progress**—check in with your writing log and consistently update it. It holds you accountable and helps motivate you to keep going.

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11. **Take rest days**—your brain and your final paper will appreciate it. It also helps to provide fresh perspective when you return to the project.

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12. **Just do it!** Literally. The only way to become a more productive writer is to write consistently and frequently.

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