

HOW TO
MAXIMIZE
— YOUR —
WRITING
TIME



JERRY B. JENKINS™

You're busy.

We all are.

But that doesn't have to stop you from writing your book.

I've heard all the excuses (I've used 'em myself):

- I work full-time...
- I have a spouse...
- My kids demand time...
- Publishers aren't exactly beating a path to my door...
- I'm paralyzed by fear that I'm not good enough...
- If only I had more time...

The truth?

We all make the time to do what we really want to do.

Notice I didn't say *find* the time. You won't ever *find* the time. You have to *make* the time, to carve it out of your schedule.

In this ebook, I'm going to show you how to overcome hindrances that may have kept you from finishing your book—then I'll show you the secret to eagerly coming back to the keyboard every day.

It starts with your priorities.

For years, I worked full time and helped my wife raise three sons. I vowed to never write when the boys were at home and awake—no shutting them out because “Daddy is writing.” So if I wanted to write books on the side, I had to do it from 9 p.m. to midnight, even though I’m a morning person.

But those were the only three hours I could dedicate to my writing. So the question became, **How desperately did I want to be an author?**

Not desperately to sacrifice time with my family, but enough to make me want to redeem that sliver of time every night. And because I was able to write without guilt over shutting out the kids, those proved to be some of the most productive years of my entire career.

I’ve written more than 190 books in the last 40 years, and I averaged around 4 per year in those days. I had no time to procrastinate.

What did I give up?

- A lot of TV
- An hour or two of sleep per night
- As full a social life as Dianna and I might have preferred

So, What’ll It Be for You?

Only you can determine your own priorities. What are you willing to give up to pursue your dream?

TV?

Movies?

Parties?

Concerts?

Sports?
Hobbies?
Social Media?

I urge you to commit to your writing. You have something to share with the world, and it'd be a shame if no one ever saw it.

5 Steps to More and Better Writing

1. Carve out the time. Again, you won't find it. Decide what has to be cut from your schedule so you can devote that time to writing.
2. Go on a media fast. TV and social media in all its forms can zap precious writing time. Go dark during your writing hours. Can't control yourself? Use apps like Anti-Social or Freedom to block Internet distractions.
3. Keep your family and your job your top priorities and either get up early or stay up late to write. If writing isn't worth this sacrifice, you don't want it badly enough.
4. Thank relatives and friends who praise your writing, but don't put much stock in it unless they're in the publishing business. To really grow and improve, develop a thick skin and learn to take criticism from people on the inside.
5. Ignore that critic camped out on your shoulder and whispering in your ear. That's just you in disguise, and you don't have a clue yet.

How to Overcome Writer's Fear

Do you worry your writing is not good enough? Join the club.

Believe it or not, even the most successful writers struggle with the same fear. It can be crippling. You can waste years because of it—years you could have spent doing what you love and influencing people. Many never write because of fear.

But here's some good news:

It's actually better to fear you're not good enough than to believe you're better than you are.

This is the opposite of the way most of us were raised. We were taught to believe we could do anything, so this fear blindsides us.

But Dean Koontz, who has sold over 450 million books, says:

"The best writing is borne of humility. The great stuff comes to life in those agonizing yet exhilarating moments when writers become acutely aware of the limitations of their skills, for it is then that they strain the hardest to make use of the imperfect tools with which they must work."

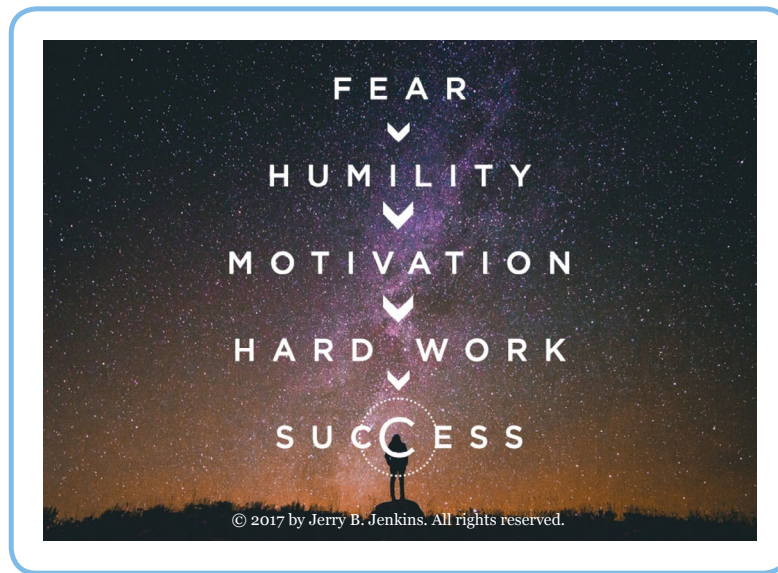
I've never been motivated by great amounts of money—not that I have anything against it!— but that quote is from a man with a net worth of 145 million dollars, solely from novel writing.

How humble would you be if your writing had netted you 145 million dollars?

Yet humility is the attitude Dean Koontz takes to the keyboard every day.

If you're afraid, fear the "limitations of your skills." Then "strain the hardest to make use of those imperfect tools with which you must work."

That's how to turn fear into humility, humility into motivation, motivation into hard work, and hard work into success. Fear is not such a bad motivator.



What to Do With Fear

As valuable as fear can be when converted into motivation, left unattended, it can cause procrastination that results in paralysis.

If you fear rejection, you're not alone—and you're certainly not out of the game. Publishing is replete with stories of bestsellers that were first rejected dozens of times. Have you really been rejected enough to forfeit your dream?

You have less reason than you think to procrastinate. In fact, you can overcome it.

How to Beat Procrastination

Everywhere I teach, all over the world, budding writers confess procrastination as if it's already killed their dream.

When I tell them they're talking to the king of procrastinators, their expressions alone imply I'm a liar.

But it's true.

That I've written over 190 books doesn't make me immune to the malady. It just means I've learned to manage it.

If you're serious about finally winning over procrastination, here's one thing you can do:

Start scheduling it.

You read that right. Schedule procrastination.

Stop stressing over it. That makes it only worse.

Don't try to conquer it. Rather, expect it, plan for it, book it on your calendar. Believe it or not, procrastination is part of the process. You'll find—as I have—that *while* you're procrastinating, your subconscious is at work on your book.

How do you make procrastination work for you?

First, establish a firm—in fact, inviolable—deadline. The only reasons you

should ever adjust your deadline are: 1 – An unavoidable personal crisis or 2 – You discover during the planning stages that the number of finished pages you must produce every writing day exceeds your capacity.

While some great writers finish 10 or even 15 pages per day, other mega-bestselling authors produce only 1 or 2. Speed should never be the point; quality is the goal.

Just remember that once you've set your deadline, you treat it as sacred.

Doubting you can pull this off because you've always been such a procrastinator? That was me too, and I still procrastinate. Knowing that, I schedule a lot of wiggle time into my calendar.

If I stall and putz around and start three or four days later than I planned, I then have to change the number of pages per day I must write to achieve my deadline. **But I will not miss that deadline.**

It's a given that I will procrastinate. But I will not lose sleep over it, because I know my subconscious is working.

The key: Never fall so far behind that the number of pages you must produce per day becomes impossible.

How to Turn Procrastination into Productivity

- Schedule your daily writing
- Expect your usual delays, not starting when you know you should
- Relax and sleep well anyway, knowing your subconscious is working on your book

- Keep a careful eye on the calendar, adjusting your pages-per-day but not letting the days or number of pages get out of hand
- Keep your deadline sacred
- Start absolutely no later than when you really have to, and enjoy the surprises your subconscious reveals

What's *your* deadline? I recommend you set one immediately—and be sure to schedule your procrastination into your calendar.

The Truth About Writer's Block

All right, it's time to put on your big kid pants and take some straight talk:

Writer's block is a myth—a lame excuse that would never fly in any other profession, trade, or craft.

Imagine yourself in any other profession—factory worker, executive, educator, you name it. You roll out of bed in the morning and you don't feel like going to work. So you call your boss and say, “I can't come in today. I have worker's block.”

Imagine how that would go over.

How can I say Writer's Block is a myth when so many suffer from it?

Believe me, I know what it feels like to have nothing in the tank, to stare at that blank screen and have no clue where to start or go next.

That's the time to remind yourself that this is a job, not a game or a hobby. There's always something you can do! Keep your seat in that chair, and do something!

Can't invent a scene, craft dialogue, create a character? Then research, call an expert, read the competition. Edit what you wrote yesterday. Anything!

Before you know it, you'll be writing again. Imagine how you'll feel with a few pages written—eager to get back to the keyboard the next day.

Why Perfectionism Is Your Enemy

(and How to Defeat It)

Confession: Besides being a procrastinator, I'm also a perfectionist.

Technology makes my problem only worse, allowing me to tweak my copy every waking moment (okay, sometimes even in my sleep).

Unfortunately, we perfectionists have to face reality: We're not perfect. I hate that, but the mirror doesn't lie. We're human. Nothing we do will ever, **ever** be perfect. Sorry. Won't happen. Can't happen.

One of my former publishers and now himself a prominent blogger and online mentor, Michael Hyatt, says in his book *Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World*:

“Perfectionism is the mother of procrastination.”

Notice how all these time wasters tie together? Perfectionism, fear, procrastination, writer's block—they feed on each other.

So let me urge you to remember why you wanted to write in the first place.

How to Find Your *Why*

When writing is most grueling, when the words just won't come (and believe me, we all have those days), remembering why you're doing it can carry you.

Author Simon Sinek says:

“People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe.”

I never set out to write bestselling novels or as-told-to stories of people like Hank Aaron, Billy Graham, Walter Payton, and others. My sole purpose for writing was to fulfill a call to full-time Christian service.

When I sensed that call as a teenager, I was already a sportswriter and assumed I would have to shelve the writing and study to become a pastor or a missionary. But a wise counselor told me, “God often equips us before He calls us.”

How gratifying to realize that I could answer the call merely by obeying. I was fortunate to understand my *why* early on.

My father had long counseled me to “be the best you can be at what you've been called to do, and you'll be more of a success than the person who is the best in the world at it but not working up to his potential.”

So my aim became to obey my calling and let the results take care of themselves. Many writers define success by royalty checks and bestseller lists. But we have no control over those. All we can do is the best work we know how to do.

So my goal (my *why*) has never been to succeed in a material sense, but to obey. To me, obedience IS success. It's my *why*.

What's your *why* for writing? Do you feel called to the craft to fulfill some larger purpose?

Maybe you're meant to share a message. Maybe you're an expert in a subject that can affect many lives.

If you have no idea what your *why* is, answering these three questions should help. And if you feel you already know it, they may help clarify it.

1. What truly matters to you?

Writing is grueling, so don't attempt it unless you're prepared to write about what makes you feel most alive. Nothing compares to the thrill of changing lives with your words. So write from your passions, from what keeps you up at night. That's what really reaches and inspires your readers.

2. What do you stand for?

If you plan to make a life of writing, you must have a carefully thought-out and lived-out worldview. As a writer, you'll find your road will grow rough. You'll face doubts. So you'd better believe in what you write.

It's critical you discover what will keep you in front of that keyboard day after day. If it's money, fame, or power, you'll find those fickle suitors, hard to win and harder to keep. Worse, they're self-oriented goals, so they never really satisfy.

3. What are your priorities?

I wanted to be a writer in the worst way, but I would not put that dream ahead of my family. Telling my wife and three sons they came first in my life was one thing—proving it was another. Kids hear what you say, but they believe what you do. That's why I established that policy of not writing while my kids were at home and awake.

Your answers to these questions should help you better understand your *why* and whether your priorities align with it.

So, what's yours?

Write it down and post it where you're reminded of it often.

You Can Do This

Apply what you've learned in this ebook and you'll find yourself maximizing the time you've carved out to achieve your dream. I hope it motivates you to get back to the keyboard every day.

You know what happens when you're excited about something—you get it done.

Hope you enjoyed this thorough guide. You can share it with a friend below if you found it useful—and stay tuned for many other actionable tips!

— Jerry B. Jenkins



Jerry Jenkins is the author of 21 *New York Times* bestsellers, including the popular *Left Behind* series. He's also written over 190 other books and is sought around the world for his expertise in writing and publishing. Jerry currently lives in Colorado with his wife Dianna.

Did this guide make you a better writer?

Click below to share it and help someone else!

