

11 Ways to Keep Writing

By Chris Howell

When I think about the craft of writing I remember a scene from the dark comedy *Throw Mama From the Train* starring Billy Crystal and Danny DeVito. Crystal plays writing instructor Larry Donner and DeVito plays his obsessed student, Owen. In a class lecture, Donner keeps repeating this advise -- A Writer Writes.

It sounds a bit simplistic but the advice is true. A writer writes ... and keeps writing. It can be difficult to write when you may be uninspired, suffering from writer's block, or just plain tired after a long day.

Here are eleven tips to keep writing in the face of adversity.

- Set writing priorities according to due dates, project size, degree of difficulty, and importance of the assignment.
- Start early. This gives you flexibility when the unexpected happens.
- Develop a writing routine – same time, same place. Avoid doing other things in your writing place.
- Use good lighting and avoid distractions. Eliminate background noise, and don't get too comfortable.
- Minimize time spent getting ready – no more than 5 minutes.
- When you don't feel like it, write anyway. This strengthens your routine and moves you steadily toward your goals. No Excuses!
- Tackle your most difficult writing chores first, while you are fresh.
- Develop the habit of writing alone. Limit interactions with others to getting missed information or to review.
- Focus on one writing project at a time.
- Take regular short breaks, but no more than 10 minutes per hour.
- Schedule well in advance. Complete a large writing project the night before deadline. Spend the last few hours polishing and improving what you've already written.

If you follow these guidelines, you'll find writing becoming easier and more enjoyable. If you consider yourself a writer, remember what Larry Donner says – A Writer Writes.