

# My Favorite Writing Productivity Hack: It's Not about Writing At All

Know your most creative writing time and then guard it zealously



Photo by [Malvestida Magazine](#) on [Unsplash](#)

A productivity hack is a shortcut or workaround that allows you to get more done in less time. And [I'm big on saving time](#). Time is one thing you cannot replace once it is spent.

Naturally, as a freelance writer, I collect productivity hack ideas. Show me how to label my files with keywords to find them at a later date, and I'm in. Help me repurpose content

for different markets to make more money? You betcha.

## **What I had to learn about a freelance writing business**

After a few years of freelancing, I had a stable of clients. But no matter how prolific I became and how well-oiled my efficiency, I needed more time to write.

That's when my writing coach urged me to examine the different kinds of tasks that are involved with a freelance writing business. Do I write 8 hours a day? Of course not. Then how did I spend my writing time?

I made a list of the tasks that are part of being a freelance writer. There are plenty that don't take much creativity but still eat up time — and energy. Then, I compared that list with the amount of time I actually spent writing. It was about 50–50.

That tracked nicely with what freelancing gurus preach. "Freelancers are spending literally 50% of their time doing the prospecting, marketing, and administrative work that they need to grow their solo businesses," says [Caitlin Pearce](#), executive director of the Freelancer's Union. Early on in my writing journey, I didn't believe it. Now I do.

## **Why my favorite productivity hack is not about writing**

That's why my favorite writing productivity hack has little to do with writing. It's this: delegate non-writing tasks to your less energetic minutes of the day or week. Then, reserve the time that you're most creative and productive for writing.

The pros endorse this approach. "For most of us, the best way to maximize creative output is to make good use of our circadian rhythm," says [psychologist Nigel Barber, Ph.D.](#) "Most people can sustain peak productivity for only about 90 minutes, at best."

## **Non-writing tasks for your non-creative time**

I get my best writing done — and the most of it — first thing in the morning. I can start pounding out content at 7 or 8 AM and I'm good for a few hours. But at 3 PM? It's a struggle. And by Friday, I'm whooped. That's why I devote those late-day windows to the endless hamster-wheel tasks necessary to the freelance writing life. Here are some tasks that are crucial to your freelance writing business but that you may want to deep-six to your low-energy moments.

## **Market your freelance writing business**

- [Pitch your services](#) to prospective editors, site owners,

and clients

- Ask for testimonials and referrals from satisfied editors, site owners, and clients
- Create content and [images for your business site](#)
- Load [website or blog content onto your business site](#)
- Pitch guest blog posts
- Schedule social media posts
- Respond to online forums related to your niche
- Network with prospects at events

## **Manage your freelance writing business**

- Write contracts
- Generate invoices
- Follow up on late payments
- Report expenses
- Prepare tax information
- Travel to interviews or meetings
- Purchase supplies
- Pay bills

## **Organize your freelance writing business**

- [Plan your content calendar](#)
- Plan next week's schedule
- Plan tomorrow's schedule
- Schedule interviews
- Choose continuing education courses

- Clean out your email inbox
- Organize your files
- Clean your workspace

## **Know when to use this writing productivity hack**

I put this productivity hack to good use by dedicating non-writing tasks to the afternoons and to Fridays. That's when my writing juices are drained. But you may write best on Friday at 5 PM.

Find out your best creative writing time. Then guard it zealously. You'll be less frustrated and more efficient. And you'll get more done.

*Kathy Widenhouse offers tips and tutorials for writers at [www.nonprofitcopywriter.com](http://www.nonprofitcopywriter.com).*