

# What is your daily writing "workout" routine?

[Scott Myers](#)

Some advice from *A Quiet Place* screenwriters Scott Beck and Bryan Woods.



Bryan Woods and Scott Beck

A few years ago, Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, who originated and co-wrote the smash hit movie *A Quiet Place*, tweeted this:

Great advice. The tweet struck a nerve generating hundreds of likes and retweets, so I reached out to Bryan and Scott to re-post it here. They agreed.

Why? Because bottom line, this is important stuff.

The schedule the guys tweeted reflects what I did when I

first broke into Hollywood in 1987. Back then, of course, there were no such things as blogs, podcasts, or even DVDs, but what I did was very much in the spirit of what Scott and Bryan recommend: Immerse yourself in the craft. Movies. TV. Scripts. Lectures. Interviews. Books.

I did not go to film school, so when I sold the spec script *K-9*, then got an overall deal with Warner Bros., I used that time as my own personal intensive education. While writing commissioned script projects, I watched everything, read everything, listened to everything, analyzed everything related to the film and TV business.

Two things going on here. First, you are feeding your understanding of the craft and the business of screenwriting. Both of considerable importance. Second, you are putting yourself in a position to compete with others in your genre space because you have to act on the supposition that **they** are equally, if not more immersed in the craft.

In emailing Bryan and Scott, I was reminded of a writing workshop I ran at UCLA in 2009. I invited one of my former students [Lisa Joy](#) to be a guest at a class session. In response to a question about what the aspiring writers should be doing, Lisa said this: "Conduct yourself as if you were already a professional writer."



Lisa Joy, co-creator, executive producer, and director of the hit HBO series 'Westworld'

Lisa explained that even though she went to Harvard Law School, then took a position as a corporate lawyer, she spent her free time as if she were already a Hollywood writer. Basically take the "workout" Scott and Bryan detailed, and condense that into a handful of hours per day, and that's what Lisa did.

Several people who responded to Bryan and Scott's tweet noted how challenging it is to pursue the screenwriting craft while working full-time jobs. The guys tweeted this:

And that brought me back to something I came up with nearly a decade ago:

1 2 7 14

**1: Read 1 screenplay per week.**

Pick out your favorite movies. Or do a genre study of

several scripts in a row in one genre. Try scripts in genres you don't particularly like to experience different tone and atmosphere. But every week, read at least 1 full-length movie screenplay.

## **2: Watch 2 movies per week.**

Go to a theater and watch 1 movie for sheer entertainment value. Rub shoulders with a real crowd to remind you of your target audience. Then cue up Netflix or pop in a DVD, and watch 1 movie to study it. Note its major plot points. Better yet, do a scene-by-scene breakdown. Maybe 1 new movie, 1 classic movie. But every week, watch at least 2 feature-length movies.

## **7: Write 7 pages per week.**

That's one page per day. It may take you ten minutes, it may take you an hour, but however long it takes, you knock out a page per day so that every week, you produce 7 script pages.

## **14: Work 14 hours per week prepping a story.**

This is how you will learn the fine art of [stacking projects](#). While you are writing one story, you are prepping another. Research. Brainstorming. Character development. Plotting. Wake up early. Take an extended lunch break. Grab a few hours after dinner. Stay up late. Whatever it takes, carve out 2 hours per day for story prep. Create a master file Word doc. Or use a spiral notebook. Put everything you come up

with into that file. You'd be amazed how much content you will generate in a month. Most professional screenwriters juggle multiple projects at the same time. Here's how you can start learning that skill-set: Writing one project, prepping another. Two hours per day so that every week, you devote 14 hours to prep.

1, 2, 7, 14.

Those are simple, clear goals. Daily goals, weekly goals.

If you do this, here's what you will have done in one year's time:

You will have read **52 screenplays**.

You will have watched **104 movies**

You will have written **2 feature-length screenplays**.

Spread that out over 5 years: 260 screenplays, 520 movies, 10 original screenplays.

That means you could have read every one of the top [101 screenplays](#) as voted by the WGA, plus 159 more.

That means you could have seen every one of the [IMDB Top 250 movies](#), plus 270 more.

That means you could have written the exact number of original screenplays Lawrence Kasdan (*Body Heat*, *The Bodyguard*, *The Big Chill*, *Grand Canyon*) wrote before he

sold his first one.

All by setting these simple goals: 1, 2, 7, 14.

Hopefully, you break into the business and have the time to apply a “workout” schedule like Bryan and Scott suggest. But until you get that point, there’s no reason why you can’t heed Lisa Joy’s advice and act as if you were **already** a professional screenwriter. Even if all you can carve out is a 1, 2, 7, 14 schedule, you are on target to doing what you need to do to learn the craft and create solid work habits once you **do** bust into the business.