

EPISODE 7

Carissa's #1 Tip to Increase Your Writing Speed

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Welcome back everyone. This is the Author Revolution Podcast and I'm your host, Carissa Andrews.

In this episode, we'll be discussing my number one tip for increasing your writing speed. And trust me, it's not going to be what you think.

But first, I'd like to mention that this podcast is sponsored by my free mini-course, 14 Writing Hacks for Busy People. If you're struggling to get words on the page, have some sort of disability that stops you from typing, or need to find better ways to slip writing into your day, this free course is for you. To get signed up, you just need to go to authorrevolution.org/writinghacks

Okay guys. So today we're going to be talking about my number one tip to increase writing speed. Before I dive into the tip, though, I want to tell you a little story.



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INCREASE YOUR WRITING SPEED**

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I've been writing fiction professionally for almost a decade now. In this time, I've written seven full length books and two novelettes. When I look back over the years and the different book writing processes I've tried out, I can honestly say that every book presents its own challenge with getting it on the page. What worked for the last book might not work for your new book. So, for me, it's always been a work in process as I trial and error different things to get words down and get excited for its flow.

What's funny is, when I wrote Pendomus (my first book), the words practically flew out of me. I was so excited every single day to get up, sit down at my computer desk, and write. It felt like I was so in the zone with what my life's purpose was meant to be that I couldn't imagine not spending the time to get this story written.

But as the years have passed, not every book has the same vibe. Don't get me wrong, they're ALL fun and I couldn't imagine a better way to spend my time. But none of them have flown through me with the same intensity that Pendomus did.

When I switched gears to write my second book, which was the second book in the series, the flow wasn't there, and I thought I was doing something wrong at first. But as it turned out, when you're going through a divorce, move, remarriage, and all that, your reptilian brain is triggered, and you go into survival mode. When that happens, creativity is stifled and it's your job to get centered again before you write.

When I did finally get centered and felt secure enough to allow the creativity to flow through me, I managed to knock out both books two and three in a four-month timespan. Then, they rapid released in late 2017.

From that point forward, I've luckily not had anything too traumatic happen, but life is certainly chaotic over here. My house has been under construction since about 2016 and because we don't have a big budget to work with, we're doing bits at a time, which makes the process drag out longer.

During this process, I've had to learn what works for me and what doesn't. What places work for me to write and which don't. For example, what worked for me when our youngest son was littler (he's almost five now), don't work anymore because of how the dynamic has changed.

Does this mean I've stopped writing?

Hell no! Well, okay, admittedly, it is challenging, but no. I write and get my books produced just as frequently, if not more so, than before. Which brings me around to my number one tip for increasing your writing speed.

Are you ready? I know you are.

Okay, here we go. My number one tip for increasing your writing velocity is:

MENTAL PREP

Not what you thought, right? Well, okay, maybe some of you picked up what I was putting down, you are authors, after all.

But in all seriousness, it's true. You can have the best intentions to dictate, to outline, to sprint, to take typing classes... whatever the case might be, but unless you do some of the mental prep before you get started, you're going to flounder and the words will trickle. Trust me, I know.

Now, it doesn't mean every time you have to figure out a new location to write or anything like that. Although you might if you're completely stuck and don't know what else to do. But it does mean you need to mentally center yourself on your goal for writing and the story itself.

What does this mean?

It means number one, giving yourself a deadline. Knowing when you need to have your work written and prepared by. If it helps, reach out to your editor (if you have one), or beta/alpha readers to let them know that by x date, you'll be giving them the first draft to review. With that simple step, you've set yourself and your work up for success because now you have an actionable, concrete goal. Just saying you're writing a book is very nebulous and it offers up way too much wiggle room to talk yourself out of doing it when the writing gets tough. And trust me, some days it will.

Have you guys heard of Parkinson's Law? It's the notion that work expands to fill the time available for its completion.

Let me repeat that. Parkinson's Law is the notion that your work—whatever it might be—will expand to fill the time available for its completion.

So, if you don't give it a deadline – honey, you are setting yourself up for a struggle you don't need. You get me?

Second, mental prep also means knowing your story before you start. If you're a pantsier, I want you to perk up and have a listen because this is going to apply to you.

When you go into a story without any idea of where you're heading, it can seem like a super exciting adventure. I get it! But the other side of that coin is that you get lost in the journey. You get stumped, stuck, or worse yet, stop writing. You need to at least have a basic roadmap in your head for how your story is meant to play out. Know the journey and the course so when you get stuck, you can look to see where you are on the map, orient yourself again, and keep going.

When you do the mental prep up front, like in the way of outlining, character building, worldbuilding, etc., you give your subconscious mind freedom to run ahead and pull out the best ideas it can find for you. Trust me, I know.

In addition, when you're doing your prep work up front in this manner – you're batching together like-minded tasks, which increases their speed because you're not switching gears midstream. So, by the time you sit down to write, you're not breaking your writerly mojo to go research something, for example. Instead, you're allowing your brain to get into the groove and spew out the words.

Okay, so for some of you saying, but Carissa, I can only sit down and write for a few minutes at a time. What difference does it make if I switch to research for a bit? It matters hugely.

Your brain is a muscle and in order to increase its neuroplasticity, and develop strong neuropathways toward being a writer, what's the one thing you think you need to do?

Yep, you guessed it. Write.

The more you write, the longer you write, the more you are flexing that big beautiful brain of yours and encouraging it to work more efficiently for you. Just like any other workout, time under tension is what makes or breaks it. So, if you're always flitting from one thing to the next, what is it you're training your brain to WANT to do? It certainly isn't to sit still for an hour and write.

You may or may not have heard this before, but it takes on average 23 minutes to get into your groove. AND if you are interrupted, interrupt yourself, or switch gears that use different cognitive resources, you won't just go straight back into your writing zone. No, it will take you another 23 minutes to be in the flow. This is why cutting down distractions is soooo important. Shut off texts, emails, the internet popup notifications. Close your door. All of it.

Stop making excuses that you can't sit down and write for an hour (or heck, maybe two, if you've really worked that brain muscle of yours). If you have any sort of disability that presents your challenge, it's not about sitting still at a computer then. It means finding a way to write that works with you, instead of against you. This is the case where working with dictation could get you your biggest win.

And if you've never done dictation, or it's gone badly, I want to remind you – when you sat down to write for the very first time, it likely didn't go super stellar either. Again, flex that brain muscle of yours and train it to do the thing you need it to do. The more you work with it, the easier it will get. Trust me.

So, there you have it. My number one tip to increase your speed is all about getting your mental prep work done in advance so you can focus on the writing when it's time. By doing it that way, you free up your mind to be in the moment with the story instead of floating about trying to figure out where to go or what to do next.



Thank you so much for joining me today. Don't forget that you can look over the show notes, find any links to things we talked about, or have another listen by going to authorrevolution.org/7. If you have questions or concerns or want to discuss this tip, feel free to drop me a line at our Author Revolution Facebook page.

Don't forget, this episode was sponsored by my free online mini-course 14 Writing Hacks for Busy People. You can get access to it right away by visiting the show notes or dropping by authorrevolution.org.

As always, if you liked this episode, I would love it if you'd leave me a review on iTunes so I can start doing listener shout-outs for my favorite ones, live on the air.

If you haven't yet subscribed to this podcast, be sure to click the subscribe button so new episodes will be downloaded to your device day they're released. Next week's episode is going to be an interesting one. For those of you looking to make a career out of your writing, stay tuned. We'll be discussing the best way to make money writing fiction.

Until next time. Go forth and be awesome.



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