

If you read back on my five years of 750 entries, most of them would be about how I don't want to write. I complain a lot here. I talk myself around in circles. I make plans for the rest of my day. A lot of my 750 is psyching myself up to do something I really don't want to do. It's my diary and my sounding board. It's the brainstorming before I write something for real. It's memories I don't want to forget and stories I'll never tell. It's become more than a habit. Writing my daily 750 is like brushing my teeth or doing my laundry. It's a thing I do because I have to do it. I don't think about it. I don't worry too much if I miss a day. I know I'll get to it eventually. I can't go very long without it. I feel the loss like I feel it whenever I'm not writing. I love a lot about being a writer. I love telling the stories in my head, and sometimes, telling them to other people, too. I love planning and doodling, naming characters and deciding where it's going to be. I love having written.

I love reading my own stories, after enough time has passed, of course. Too soon, and all I feel is cringing embarrassment. I love publishing, making my words into something that people can read for themselves. Selling my words is pretty cool, too. But there are days when I hate writing. I hate when the words come out wrong. I hate when nothing makes sense, when it doesn't sound on the page like it does in my head. I hate the ass-numbing slog of putting down words, one by one, day after day, until you finally have enough strung together that you can go back to the beginning and turn it into something readable. It doesn't always happen like that, but it happens like that a lot. The bad days add up. That's why we have to hang onto the good ones. Those days when the words fall out of your fingers, when you lose track of what you wanted to write because what you're actually writing is so much better, when it's been an hour, and you're still writing.

750 words doesn't fit into this standard 8-page, quarter-size zine I make every week. It barely fills four pages. This piece of writing about writing is 1164 words. The reason writers write so much about writing is because it's the thing we're thinking about more than anything else. We're thinking about how to get better. We're thinking about the next book. We're dreading the next deadline. Some of us edit. Some of us teach. All of us write, even if it's only for ourselves. It's in the doing where we find out what we're supposed to be doing. I never know what the right words are until I put them down, whether in pixels or in ink. If they sound perfect in my head, something will be lost in the journey to the page. Something which I have to find again. But I know the path. I've walked it before. I do this every day, and I know the twists and turns. I know that writing leads me where I'm supposed to be. The amazing thing is that it's a different place every day.

Those are magical days and worth every single bad one. That's why I write every day, whether I want to or not. Whether I have something to say or not. Whether I'm feeling it or not. I'm a smart woman. I've been doing this forever. And still, I never know, even when I sit down at my desk and open my laptop, whether this is a good day or a bad day. No one can know that until they start writing. But if there's a chance that today, this day, could be one of those good ones, I'm not going to waste it. I'm going to start here, rambling through 750 words until I've found a small piece of an idea. I might take that idea over to Scrivener, break it up, and turn it into the outline for a story. I might paste it into a text box in Scribus and figure out how it fits into an 8-page zine. Or I might just hang onto it, hold it in my head, turn it over in my hand until it's warm and smooth. It might not be anything yet, but I'll be ready for it. The hope of every writer is knowing what to do with an idea when its time comes.

More than five years ago, I discovered this thing called 750 Words (dot com). It's a website which takes the idea of Morning Pages from Julia Cameron and makes it a bit more accessible for those of us who grew up typing instead of practicing cursive. Morning Pages, as set down by Cameron in her book THE ARTIST'S WAY, is an exercise to write, non-stop, three pages, longhand, every morning. It's a great idea, and I have nothing against writing longhand on paper. I do it most days in my notebook. But I doubt I would've stuck with this exercise this long if I wasn't doing it on my computer. For me, it's the daily habit that's important, not when I write, where I write, or how. I write every day, and when I break a streak, I feel bad about it. Feeling bad about it is important. It wouldn't mean anything to me if I didn't feel bad when I didn't do it. More important, though, is getting back to the keyboard to try again the next day. Today, I finished day 42 of a new streak.

I lost my last one when I completely blanked as to whether I had written or not. Most days, I try to do it in the morning. Your brain hasn't fully kicked in, so you can write without thinking. It's the best time to blurt out a few hundred words about nothing. And my 750 are almost always about nothing. In the early days, I was so excited about the idea. I had grand plans to use this space and time to write books. If I could write 750 of something new every day, I could finish a novel in about two months. But this isn't a place to write great prose. It's not even a place for correct grammar. Sometimes, sentences go on too long. Sometimes, they're not even complete. Some days I write without my glasses. If I have a headache, I turn down the screen to black and write completely blind. I don't need to see my words to write them. I only need to move my fingers. 750 words isn't about writing so much as it's about writing fast. The website encourages this, tracking time and marking distractions.