**Working from home:** **How the great writers do it**

Many of those who started working from home in the past few years have discovered that it can be incredibly difficult to work efficiently. Unless you’re very focused, you’ll find too many distractions and excuses NOT to work.

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

If there’s one group of people with extensive experience working from home, it’s writers. Writers have long had to **deal with** the **challenge** of working from home, having to **meet a deadline** to finish a book and to **avoid distractions** that can make them **fall behind schedule**. And writers have been generous with their advice.

* Start early. If you **get** difficult tasks **out of the way**, you’ll feel more relaxed later on.
* **Keep to a routine** and do the same things at the same time every day.
* Set daily goals. For a writer it can be a number of words, for you it might just be hours of work.
* Remove anything that takes your attention away from your work.
* Exercise regularly. Even if you live in a tiny apartment in the middle of the city, you need to do some physical activity every day.

(2)  \_\_\_\_\_

These tips could have been taken directly from the lives of great writers. Ernest Hemingway began writing at 6 a.m., because, he said, there was no one around to disturb him. Ursula K. Le Guin used to wake up at 5.30. She spent the first 45 minutes of the day lying in bed, thinking, and started writing by 7.15, finishing her day’s work by lunchtime. James Bond author, Ian Fleming, started his day with a swim in the sea. Then he wrote from 9 till noon, had lunch and a nap and worked more from 5 p.m. He had a goal of 500 words per day.

(3)  \_\_\_\_\_

In the internet era, authors’ routines aren’t necessarily that different from previous times. Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami says he doesn’t use social media at all, and describes his work day as going from 4 a.m. till about 10, followed by a run or a swim; after that he reads and listens to music, and goes to bed at 9 p.m. However, the digital world is a big factor for many authors. Novelist Zadie Smith doesn’t have a smartphone and uses internet-blocking software on her laptop in case she feels like reacting to news or messages. Australian writer Benjamin Law recommends an app which turns off your social media and internet for certain lengths of time so you don’t **lose concentration**.

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

Not every author hides from the internet. Bernardine Evaristo starts her day with two cups of coffee, then goes online to catch up on the news and opinions about what’s happening. She starts work after that and keeps at it till 9 p.m., but not without taking breaks to exercise and take a siesta.

And not every writer writes at home. Poet and novelist Maya Angelou couldn’t. She used to check into a hotel room and put a ‘Do not disturb’ sign on the door before she started writing. But wherever you work, if you follow the advice of these writers and use your time wisely, you can **get a lot done**, or at least you can finish your work day faster and get away from your desk sooner!

**Exercise 1: According to the article, are the statements True (T), False (F) or Not Mentioned (NM)?**

1. Writers have more experience working from home than many other people.

2. Hemingway started early because he wanted to finish early.

3. Le Guin started writing at exactly 7.15.

4. Fleming tried to write at least 500 words a day.

5. Murakami doesn’t use the internet.

6. Smith doesn’t want to answer messages when she’s writing.

7. Evaristo likes to find out what people think about the news.

8. Angelou lived in a hotel.

**Exercise 2: Match the phrases in bold in the article with the meanings (1–8).**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. keep away from things which take your attention  2. follow a plan or timetable, without changing it  3. do a task by a particular time  4. finish a large amount of work  5. stop giving attention to something  6. be late in doing work or a task  7. manage a difficult situation successfully  8. finish something so you’re free to do something else | a. deal with a/the challenge  b. meet a deadline  c. avoid distractions  d. fall behind schedule  e. get something out of the way  f. keep to a routine  g. lose concentration  h. get a lot done |

**Exercise 3: Work in pairs and discuss.**

1. Which ideas in the article are the most useful for you?

2. Which authors’ routines and habits are the most balanced?

3. Which writer’s routine is most like yours?

**ANSWER KEY**

Exercise 1:

1-T 2-NM 3-F 4-T 5-NM

6-T 7-T 8-F

Exercise 2:

1-c 2-f 3-b 4-h 5-g 6-d 7-a 8-e

Exercise 3: Answers vary.