

ONE TIP

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I joined the faculty of Rutgers University as an assistant professor when I was 26 years old. The following summer, my daughter was born. When she was under 2 and I was still untenured, I signed a contract to do an educational psychology textbook. Beside the words “naïve” and “optimistic” in the dictionary should be my picture. I do not recommend caring for an infant, teaching classes, doing your research, and writing a text, all while an untenured faculty—but I survived and I learned not to waste a minute of writing.

The notion of waiting to write until I had “time” had to be dispelled. I wrote while my daughter napped, I proofread in doctors’ and dentists’ offices, and I wrote as soon as the family went to sleep. This last effort was the hardest because by nighttime I was tired too. But the bargain I made with myself was that if I just sat down at my desk and worked for 10 minutes, then I was allowed to go to bed if I still felt too tired to work. Almost every night, the work carried me for hours once I began, but without the first step of getting to my desk, those hours of writing would have been lost—just sit down and learn to work tired.

I also practiced a few other writing tips you may have read:

- Don’t push to the end of a project before you stop for the day. If you have to mobilize for a whole new section or project the next day, you may procrastinate. Instead, stop with something to complete—you will get right back into writing faster the next day if you can pick up where you left off. Then if you finish and have time, you will have the energy to start on a new task, and stop that one before you are done so the next day it is easy to pick up again, and on, and on.
- Even if you only have a little time, think of a small task that moves you forward—poke holes in the project. You can grade papers anywhere these days.
- Set interim deadlines for parts of a writing task and write them on your calendar. No matter what, always, always write at least one page a day.
- Reward yourself with answering email when you finish a chunk of writing.

The next tip may seem contradictory—relish the unique joys of being on a college campus. I learned this lesson very late and wish I had acted on it sooner. My focus on having a family, faculty duties, and writing made me turn down or overlook many opportunities at my universities—talks, museum exhibits, concerts, walks through university gardens and parks, social gatherings with students and colleagues, working out in beautiful facilities, great swimming pools—the list of university events and opportunities for individuals and families is endless. Take advantage of them—after you write that one page.

One Tip is published bi-monthly by the Membership Committee of APA Division 15 (Educational Psychology). In *One Tip*, senior scholars tell their stories and share insights for junior scholars. If you would like to contribute a piece, please contact Division 15 Membership Committee Chair, Serena Shim at sshim@bsu.edu.