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Writing without Interruption

by Dan Poynter

Good writing requires concentration. Interruptions often occur when you are deep in thought and producing your best work.

Emergencies such as earthquakes, fire, and flood are interruptions we can accept. We may even weave the unexpected experience into our future work. Telephone calls, visitors and unnecessary questions are interruptions that may make a writer a bit snippy. This is perfectly normal. If people do not want to hear you yell at them, they should leave you alone.

Novelist Judith Krantz places this sign on her door:

DO NOT COME IN. DO NOT KNOCK. DO NOT SAY HELLO. DO NOT SAY "I'M LEAVING." DO NOT SAY ANYTHING UNLESS THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE.

Explain to your housemates: "I love you but I am working now. Working requires concentration and one brief interruption can cause me to lose a train of thought and lose an hour or more of time. Your brief greeting or question could cause me to lose a precious thought that will affect our income." Set boundaries and unplug the telephone.

God made the earth in six days and then he rested. He could have done the job in just four days if it had not been for all the interruptions.

Sue Grafton lives in Santa Barbara. In 1993 she returned to the University of Louisville to accept an honor. On a lark, she went to look at houses—and bought one. Now she writes in both places. She says "It's really quiet in Kentucky because no one knows when I'm there."

Writing is a solitary occupation. Family, friends and society are the natural enemies of the writer. He must be alone, uninterrupted, and slightly savage if he is to sustain and complete an undertaking.
—Lawrence Clark Powell, author.

Whether you are crafting fiction or nonfiction, you must to be able to focus on the entire manuscript. You need and deserve not to be interrupted. As Sue Grafton says: "Writing has to come first".

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