



How to write content when you'd rather tweak the theme.

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As a WordPress instructor, I find that students will do anything to avoid facing an empty post or web page. This includes pondering theme color schemes, tweaking fonts, obsessing about white space, and spending extra time learning CSS so they can change styles at the source.

Style and beauty are always good but there's something even more essential: NUMBERS.

But what is it that makes a truly successful website? Engaged readers. Return visitors. Completed transactions.

NUMBERS.

Sadly, theme fussing and style tweaking do very little to increase visitor numbers. Because ...

Readers don't care.

Design is transparent to most visitors; it's a means to an end. What readers want is content. Content is scanned, consumed, bookmarked, shared, and purchased.

You theme developers—I'm not saying your design isn't important. It's *very* important. It's just that in most cases, tweaking the theme isn't as critical as uploading good written content. The theme already looks fine.

Why continue to tweak?

We tweak because it produces fast, satisfying, visual results. It feels significant. And yes, it may even make the website look a little better.

Writing is hard. It starts with a scary blank page. It requires a lot of time and effort. The end result can feel unfinished. Writers often experience mild dissatisfaction no matter how often they edit a piece.

I face this dissatisfaction regularly. So much so, that I've been forced to develop coping mechanisms to keep food on the table.

One of my favorite coping strategies is the following mantra process. It pushes me into a production zone no matter how much I want to procrastinate.

Decide ahead of time.

Like any good practice, the mantra process works best if decisions are made early on.

Decide what you need.

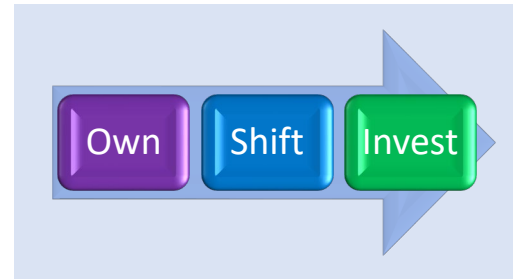
Before you use the mantra, get your workspace in functional order: docs, pens, websites, cats, coffee cup, whatever. Making decisions when you're writing wastes valuable energy. You don't have enough in reserve to fritter it away.

Decide your timeframe.

How long do you intend to write? Decide now. If you know you can't focus for 30 minutes, then shorten the time or simplify the task. It's better to succeed at a series of 5-minute intervals than fail at 30. You're building new neuronal pathways and learning to trust your intentions. *Success is not optional.*



The mantra process.



The process itself takes about 5 seconds. It's three simple steps.

1. Own.
2. Shift.
3. Invest.

STEP 1: Own it.

Acknowledge the distraction aloud.

When you start dorking around, own what you're doing. Say aloud, *"I'm distracting myself from what's most important."*

No excuses.

You may have valid reasons for being distracted but your goal isn't to give them purpose, it's to do what you set out to do. Acknowledge the problem and jump right into Step 2.

STEP 2: Shift it.

Declare your intention aloud.

After you own the problem, speak your intention to do something else. *"Instead of being distracted, I'll write content for <<minutes>>. Content comes first; everything else is second."*

A sure thing.

Don't rethink it. Just say it and get busy. You can always modify it later or continue writing after the allotted time. If you step back into decision-making, you're buying into another form of distraction.

STEP 3: Invest it.

Speak your mantra aloud.

"I don't want to _____ but I'll do it anyway."

If you're writing, then it's, "I don't want to write but I'll do it anyway."

Simply fill in the blanks. The mantra works on anything you've been procrastinating.

Do it now.

Don't declare your mantra and then do something else. Immediate action invests the mantra with authority. Without investment, a mantra is simply another anemic affirmation.

Action invests the mantra with power. Without investment, it's simply another anemic affirmation.

Say it with a smile.

This isn't about anger, disgust, or guilt. You're not yelling at yourself. On the contrary, you're being objective, kind, and specific. Like a parent or grandparent.

Say what works.

Some folks prefer mantras that speak only in the affirmative such as, "I love writing and I choose to do it now. Yay Me!"

Say whatever floats your boat. I personally need to acknowledge the resistance before I can move forward.

Variations.

Make the mantra your own but keep it simple, short, and direct. Here are a few styles I like to use:

- *I don't want to _____ but I'll _____ anyway.*
- *I don't want to _____ but so what? I'll do it anyway.*
- *So what if I don't want to _____? I'll do it anyway.*

Ready set go!

You've decided what you need and how much time you can successfully focus (less is more). You've also decided on your mantra. Good job. Now you're ready.

OWN → SHIFT → INVEST

The more often you practice these three steps, the more work you'll accomplish and the more powerful you and the mantra will become.

Yay You!



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Images: David Beatz, on Unsplash