

16 Ways to Turn Writing "Dead Time" into Productive Time ...

By John Wood

One of the keys to success as a freelance writer is minimizing the time you spend between paying assignments. But if you do find yourself with some time on your hands, you can still do things that move your career forward.

Drawing inspiration from Bob Bly's book *Write More, Sell More*, I'm going to talk about 16 things you can do to fill what Bob calls your "dead time."

These activities will not only move your career forward, but could also quickly turn any downtime you have into income.

1.

Write an article – Bob says one of the easiest self-promotions you can do is to write an article. Writing articles makes you an expert in people's minds, which is a sure way to impress prospects and clients.

You could sell your article to a client or a website in the same niche. Or you could submit it to an article site such as EzineArticles.com and GoArticles.com. If you do the latter, your article could be published by hundreds of websites, which will help drive traffic to your freelance writing site (be sure to include a link in your article).

You can also include a copy of your article in mailings to prospects and clients, and/or you can post them on your freelance writing website.

2.

Work on a book (or e-book) – Bob says that over his freelance career, he's always had at least one book contract going. It's fun, profitable, and prestige building. Have you considered writing a book? Remember, you can always start off small. You could write a short, writing-related "how-to" e-book to give away as an incentive for people subscribe to your newsletter.

3. **Take a part-time job** – Bob writes that many advertising agencies, publishers, and public relations firms hire freelance writers on a part-time basis. Often, they can set you up with one or two days' work on a regular schedule. They might not pay as much as work you do directly for a client, but that extra cash comes in handy if you're not working anyway.

4. **Become a publisher** – Many freelancers branch out and start to publish their own information products, such as books, e-books, reports, audio programs, and newsletters, in niches they're passionate about. If you're interested in becoming a self-publisher, check out Gary Scott's [Self-Fulfilled: How to be a Writer and Publisher](#).

5.

Teach – Bob says although the pay is often "meager," teaching adult education classes at a college does have its benefits: (1) it gets you out and among people (writers are sometimes a bit too solitary for their own good, Bob says), (2) it gives you excellent exposure and enhances your reputation, (3) you'll learn a lot about the subject you're about to teach, and (4) you can recycle the source material into an article, book, report, audio program, speech, etc.

If you'd like to teach college, university, or high school adult education programs, Bob suggests you check continuing education schedules from the facilities in your area (either check online or get your hands on one of their catalogs), and then write the program director proposing course topics that they do not currently offer.

6.

Create a seminar – If you can't get a college to hire you or you want a bigger part of the profits, consider creating your own seminar. You can sell your seminar to a corporation or rent your own room and sell tickets. Early on his career, Bob gave a talk about "How to Become a Published Author" that brought him between \$1,200 and \$1,500 for one day's work.

You could also repurpose your seminar, expand on the topic, and turn it into a money-making website. A money-making website is a website that attracts thousands of visitors to it each month because of its interesting, educational, and relevant content. Note: web expert Nick Usborne gives you his step-by-step formula for creating a money-making website (and turning your visitors into big dollars) in his program [How to Write Your Own Money-Making Websites](#).

7. **Spend more time on each project** – If you know you have a dry spell on the horizon, spend more time on the job you're currently doing. If you put in the extra effort, it will probably be noticeable to your client and it could pay off with some new assignments.

8.

Read – Confucius once said, "No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading, or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance." There is never enough time to soak in all the great information there is out there. Read books on writing, marketing, advertising and communications, your niche, something you're passionate about, and so on. You should also read about successful people.

And while it's a productive time-filler in slow times, you should always be sure to set aside at least half an hour each day to read, no matter how busy you are.

9. **Learn a new piece of software** – A great way to boost your productivity is to learn a new software package or learn more about a software package you currently use. For example, most everyone knows how to use Microsoft Word, but do you know how to use some of the more advanced features like Mail Merge and Macros? Why not learn? It can save you time and frustration down the road, not to mention make your life easier and potentially more productive.

10. **Organize your files** – It's a great feeling having your files organized both in your office and on your computer. So if you have some free time on your hands, organize your files. Go through that big stack of paper that's accumulated on your shelf and weed out what's not important and file the rest. Rearrange the folders and files on your computer so they're

more easily identifiable and easier to access.

11. **Organize your office** – Make your office space work better for you. Unclutter your bulletin board (or buy a bulletin board if you don't have one), organize your drawers, rearrange your office furniture, and, in general, make your work space a more pleasant and efficient place to be.
 12. **Take a course** – With the Internet, of course, you can take a wide variety of courses without even leaving your home office. If you're looking to expand your copywriting skills, sign up for one of AWAI's copywriting programs. My recommendation is that you start with [The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting](#) and later [The Masters Program for Six-Figure Copywriting](#). And remember, the course you take doesn't always have to be about writing or marketing. You can sign up for something that makes you more of an expert in your niche.
 13. **Be social with other writers** – It's always a good idea to keep in touch with your fellow writers. Bly points out in his book *Write More, Sell More* that it can "stimulate your thinking, expose you to new ideas, broaden your network of contacts, and even result in referrals and new business." The Internet makes this easy, of course, but you can also make new contacts locally by searching for and attending events listed on Meetup.com.
 14. **Do something nice for yourself** – Sometimes, it's good to be a little selfish. So remember to reward yourself for past jobs well done. Maybe that involves going to a movie, show, or concert, booking a spa day, or visiting an old friend you haven't seen in a while.
 15. **Become an expert in a specific field** – Max Lincoln Schuster, co-founder of the Simon and Schuster publishing house, used to urge people: "Begin at once – not today, or tomorrow, or at some remote indefinite date, but right now at this precise moment – to choose some subject, some concept, some great name or idea or event in history on which you can eventually make yourself the world's supreme expert."
- Thanks to the Internet, building up your reputation as an expert in your field has never been easier. Do the research, write some articles, and post them online, and you'll find you have instant credibility.
16. **Do the marketing you never have time to do** – The key to freelancing success is to always be marketing yourself and your services. So if you hit a lull in your paying assignments, it's an excellent time to set up a system to do the marketing you never otherwise seem to have time to do. If you need some "marketing inspiration," check out Cindy Cyr's article [The 19 Secrets to Selling Your Freelance Services Successfully](#). Once you get in the swing of things, having a system in place will make it that much easier to incorporate marketing your services into your daily plan.

And as long as you're not in the middle of a financial crisis, dead time can actually be a good thing. It's a great time to get organized, recharge your batteries, and set your sights on new challenges and goals to conquer.

Keep this list handy and you'll always have an action plan should you find yourself between assignments or with extra time on your hands. And if you especially focus on number 16 on this list, you'll find you're between paying jobs less and less.

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1 Response to "16 Ways to Turn Writing "Dead Time" into Productive Time..."

Thank you for contributing this article. It was a joy to read about your ideas.

Bob Bly has always been an inspiration for this writer and for others too.

Having said that, it is equally important to broaden your horizons.

For example, you could go out of your way to cultivate hobbies and interests.

Copywriters too often make the mistake of plunging headlong into marketing without delving deep into other subjects and disciplines.

Copywriting depends on having the mindset of a true "Renaissance" person.

Archan Mehta – over a year ago

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