

The Happy Balanced Writer
Workbook One: Work/Life Balance



Table of Contents

Chapter One: What Is the Happy Balanced Writer?	2
Chapter Two: Achieving Work/Life Balance	4
Chapter Three: Distractions and Procrastination	9
Chapter Four: Setting Yourself Up for Success	13
Chapter Five: Closing Thoughts	19
Acknowledgements	20
Bio	21

Disclaimer: © Holly Davis 2019 All Rights Reserved — You do not have permission to share this document, or alter it with the purpose of sharing as your own creation, with anyone, for any reason.



Chapter One: What Is the Happy Balanced Writer?

*"Never get so busy making a living
that you forget to make a life."
— Dolly Parton*

Who I Am

Hello and welcome to the Happy Balanced Writer! My name is Holly Davis, and I wear many hats. In real life, I work full-time as an outpatient physical therapist, drive forty minutes to and from work every day, take care of my fur babies, spend time with my fiancé, do household chores which include all things “adulting,” spend time with my mom and older sister for “fam night” once a week, try to see various friends once a month, annnnd that’s it. Phew. Pretty busy life, huh? It seems like I don’t have too much time for anything else.

But you see, I have a not-so-secret life as a middle grade/young adult fantasy writer aspiring to be a published author. This dream consumes most of my brain space as I try to squeeze my writer life into any spare moments I have.

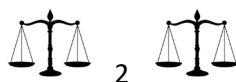
“But wait, Holly, you just said you don’t have much time for anything else.”

Not quite.

What does my writer life entail? I outline, draft, and edit a novel about once a year; stay engaged and current on my social media platforms, which include Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter; post one or two videos a week on my YouTube channel (which includes scripting, setting up my recording space, filming, editing, making thumbnails, descriptions, etc); watch YouTube videos and read writing craft books to improve my craft and learn from fellow writers; read books both inside and outside of my genre; and work on side projects like this workbook! Okay, now what did I say about all that time I don’t have?

Forget about needing more time. What about energy? What about needing to sleep, eat, relax, and just chill, so that I can do ALL of the things? The thing is, we’re not meant to do all of the things. Trying to do all of the things will lead to you not wanting or being able to do very much at all.

Forget about everything else I’m doing on the writerly side of things. Let’s say all I do is work on my novel. Well, that’s still a struggle. It’s hard enough to balance just work and



writing, which is why I call writing my part-time job. Sure, it's fun, but it's also work! It takes time, energy, and talent. It also requires discipline, perseverance, and determination, all of which I've acquired (and tried to maintain) throughout the past four years.

Why I Created This Workbook

I'm eager to teach you the strategies I've learned from my experiences in life as well as from those around me to help you achieve work/life balance and become a HAPPY BALANCED WRITER. I want you to find the time to write without neglecting your daily tasks, to be happy, fulfilled, stress-free, and productive. We already endure enough stress without all the craziness of the writer life. Stress, self-doubt, laziness, and fear are what stop people from reaching their dreams. I don't want you to be one of those people. I want every single one of you to have your book on the shelves, and I want every single one of YOUR books on MY shelf. ☺

I, too, want to achieve Happy Balanced Writer status. I'm not always there. Sometimes I reach it, but I quickly fall back. I'm constantly faced with challenges which help me learn and grow. I'm not perfect, which is why I've created this workbook—not only to help you, but to help myself as well. Because I believe in these workbooks 100%. If you want to achieve Happy Balanced Writer status, keep reading. You'll be grateful you did.

Who This Workbook Is for

This workbook is for:

- Full-time and part-time workers who write on the side
- Full-time writers looking to organize their life and increase productivity
- Students who try to balance classes and writing
- Writers looking to self- or traditionally publish
- Writers at all points in their journey towards publication
- People whose productivity suffer due to poor mental and physical health

How to Use This Workbook

I recommend printing out this PDF so that you can handwrite your answers. If you'd rather not print the pages out, you can always write your answers in a journal. Lastly, DO THE EXERCISES. You can read all about my tips, but if you don't apply them to your life, you can't truly implement these strategies and exact lasting changes. So, grab a pen, have a seat, and let's dive in.

Chapter Two: Achieving Work/Life Balance

*"You will never feel truly satisfied by work
Until you are satisfied by life" – Heather Schuck*

Struggles with Work/Life Balance

So, you guys just read about all the things that occupy my time, and therefore, disrupt my balance of work and life. For me, and most of us, our lives are like tipped scales. We're giving so much to one area of our life (probably work) that we neglect other areas (probably writing). We get frustrated because, let's face it, we love writing, but we also want to make money off of our writing. We want to be able to write full-time and fully sustain ourselves off our writing. But we can't do that without time and energy. And thus, real life "gets in the way."

Here are some common things that take time and/or energy away from your writing:

- Working your full- or part-time job
- Caring for a family member (elderly)
- Caring for your children
- Spending time with your significant other
- Getting chores done
- Spending time with friends
- Cooking
- Working out
- Commuting

Now tell me, would you look at this list and say, "Well, guess I can't do the dishes or call my mom back because I have to write." No, of course not. You NEED to do the dishes. You need to call your mom back. But in your mind, you also NEED to write. That's why this workbook will help you find balance. It'll show you how to do everything you both want and need to do, all while staying sane and avoiding burnout.

Now that we know the things that take up our time aren't necessarily bad, but just a part of life, you might still struggle with that fact. This can manifest in many ways.

Your struggles might include:

- Not understanding the balance between discipline and rest
- Not giving things up to write instead



- Not recognizing when to rest and refuel and when to be productive
- Not writing after a stressful, busy day at work
- Not waking up early enough to write
- Not giving writing the proper amount of time and attention
- Having a narrow focus and burning out quickly
- Resenting your job because writing is what you really want to do for a living
- Not getting enough sleep in order to get things done

How Having Balance Affects Your Writing

So, we see all the things that put us off balance. Well, some of those are things you need to do, like chores and work. They aren't going away anytime soon, so how can you find the time and energy to write despite everything else you've got going on? Part of it is realizing all the benefits of having work/life balance.

Having work/life balance leads to:

- Improved performance at work and in your writing life
- Higher quality of life
- Higher productivity
- Less stress
- Less fatigue
- Better health
- Better time management
- Ability to focus on the activities that make you happy
- Letting go of perfectionism
- Being able to unplug and let go of time-wasting activities

Okay, so now you know all the benefits of having balance in your life. How can you gain these benefits, crush your goals, and achieve Happy Balanced Writer status?

Ways to Achieve Work/Life Balance

Finding balance can be tough. That's why you need to evaluate your life and see what is taking up most of your time. Are you mindlessly scrolling through Facebook or Twitter in the morning, then scrambling to get ready for work and cursing yourself for not waking up earlier and writing? Then you come home after work and are too tired? Yeah, sounds familiar to me, too.

You can avoid these pitfalls by setting commitments for both home and work and sticking to them. When you write them in your calendar or in a list, you have a visual reminder of everything you must do, which can help ensure you don't overcommit or stretch yourself too thin on a project. It's okay to say no. You'll know that every day doesn't have to be a

writing day. You're going to be busier one day? Okay, then make that you're off day. Just make sure you've planned your next writing day/session. Setting priorities is the key to finding what you value most in life and where you want your time to go. Is scrolling social media not a priority? Then you can cut the time that you're on by posting your own post, engaging in a couple other peoples' posts, then moving on.

Part of sticking to your priorities—aka writing—is having the discipline to focus on that one task, even if you'd rather be binge-watching a Netflix show or sleeping in. It's all about regaining control of your life. But of course, you need that down time and can't always be "on." So find the times you're going to be in beast mode and the times you won't. In those downtime moments, you need to relax. Have a social life. Have "me" time. Enjoy the weekend. Take a vacation. This will leave you satisfied and not feeling like a work-a-holic with your job or writing life.

Interesting enough, another way to achieve work/life balance is to realize that there are going to be times you won't have work/life balance. You might be temporarily busier than usual, such as when moving houses or states, planning a wedding, getting sick, or dealing with the loss of a loved one. This is completely normal. When the craziness settles, you can jump back on the wagon with the tools you've gained from this workbook.

Remember, goals are things you have control over. Hopes are the things that you don't. So give yourself compassion.

"You'll have good days, bad days, overwhelming days, too tired days, I'm awesome days, I can't go on days. And every day you'll still show up." -Unknown

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

What is your definition of work/life balance?

List the activities you do most often and how long they take

Are these activities necessary?

Is there something you can shorten time on or cut out altogether?

List the top 5 priorities you want to focus on in life

How will you commit to these priorities?

How will you de-stress and avoid tipping the scales?

Chapter Three: Distractions and Procrastination

*"Never do tomorrow what you can do today.
Procrastination is the thief of time."*

—Charles Dickens

Common Distractions/Ways to Procrastinate

Oh technology, how I both love and loathe thee. Just kidding...kind of. Phones and computers are both a blessing and a curse, making everything accessible at our fingertips, yet also making it harder for us to stay focused on our goals because of the ease of falling into their time-consuming trap. Of course, technology isn't the only way we writers become distracted and procrastinate. Here are some common reasons besides the internet:

- Your own mental state (downward spiral from stress or anxiety)
- Not having a structured routine/not scheduling in writing time
- Managing your household/daily chores
- Taking care of your marriage and/or children
- Taking care of fur babies
- Sleeping in
- TV
- Wanting to read instead

Any of these sound familiar? Write your top distractions down below.

How does it make you feel when you procrastinate? Lazy? Undisciplined? Weak? Maybe you feel that way, but that doesn't mean you ARE that way. Don't beat yourself up because getting distracted is a common problem. That's why I included it in this workbook! Sure we all love writing, but sometimes it IS hard to sit down and get the words in. Sometimes it feels like work. And so, we're more likely to procrastinate. Let's see how it affects your writing.

How Distractions/Procrastination Affect Your Writing

Obviously, if you're procrastinating, you're not getting things done! You're not meeting your word count, finishing that draft, sending your self-edited manuscript to beta readers, etc. This is going to shift your timeline and make it take even longer to accomplish your goals. This can lead to you feeling disheartened and cause a cycle in which you beat yourself up and don't write/edit even more.

Ways to Overcome Distractions/Procrastination

The first step in overcoming procrastination is to recognize that you're procrastinating. Once you notice you're not doing what you originally planned to do, ask yourself: What are the reasons you're procrastinating? Is it because you're bored with your current project? Are you feeling burned out? Once you find the root of your procrastination, it can help you determine next steps. Some people will realize they are just getting distracted per usual and will refocus on their desired task. Others will try and try to focus, but their minds keep wandering or their heads feel heavy and blocked. That's when you know you might need some structured down time to recharge and refuel before getting back to the words.

Other ways that will help include making a to-do list, whether on a physical calendar, in a planner, on Google calendar, on a post-it note, etc. Batch the activities so that you stay in the mindset for those tasks. For example, set aside a block of time to write, another block of time for chores, another block of time for your author platform, etc. This will keep you focused and in the zone.

Another tip is to set deadlines. If you set deadlines, it's easier to prioritize those tasks related to that project. And with a specific date in mind, you're less likely to become derailed by shiny new ideas or the distractions you listed above, because hey, who doesn't want to meet their goals and tell the world about it?

Speaking of prioritizing your activities, I learned this excellent strategy from my good friend, Savannah J. Goins. The gist is to write down two "mission criticals" each day, meaning if there are only two things you can accomplish that day, what would those be? This helps you zero in on what's really important and stay focused. When you complete your two mission criticals for the day, bam! You automatically feel like a BOSS. Then anything extra you accomplish is a bonus. ☺

Avoiding distractions may be impossible in the environment you're in, no matter how disciplined you are. Therefore, it might help for you to change locations. If you get distracted by the internet, write outside, or in a place where you won't connect to the Wi-Fi. Getting interrupted too many times at home? Go to a café. If you must stay at home, is there a quieter place inside you can stow away to be less distracted? Maybe throwing a pair of headphones or even ear plugs can help you focus a little better.

And lastly, procrastination is not a self-control issue. You have self-control. It's your self-management and emotions that can push you towards procrastination. Sometimes we push through distractions, but we're more so forcing ourselves to get back on the saddle instead of understanding our bodies need that small break. In this case, it might help to actually "unschedule" your time. Do something for 15-30 minutes to help you recharge that brings you joy. This can help you feel less overwhelmed by your to-do list and help you look forward to returning to your writing naturally and effortlessly.

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

How do you procrastinate?

How can you overcome these distractions?

What are your top 3 goals you want focus on right now?

How will you hold yourself accountable for these goals?

When/how will you give yourself grace if you are distracted?

Chapter Four: Setting Yourself Up for Success

"Get out of your own way. Often, we're our own worst enemy when working towards our goals."

-Robert T. Kiyosaki

Setting Routines

Having a routine is the key to setting yourself up for success with work/life balance. Creating structure and planning your schedule will help you maintain a well-balanced life because you can specifically block the time you need for both work and relaxation, for both writing and your author platform.

So, do you have a routine/routines? If yes, what are they for? And if not, why not?

How Not Having a Routine Affects Your Writing

No routine can lead to a lack of direction, leading to procrastination and distraction, which we hopefully conquered in the last chapter. It can make you feel undetermined and unorganized. You need to have a clear direction for your goals just like you would for studying for a test or practicing for a sports competition. You prepare before you dive in. You need to do the same for your general life and your writing life.

Ways to Set Yourself Up for Success

Know that in order to accomplish your goals, you don't need to multitask if that doesn't work for you. Give whatever your number one goal is for that day your complete attention before moving on to the next task. On the flip side, if you're able to multitask, make sure you're multitasking activities that are easy to overlap. Can you brainstorm ideas for your manuscript or what you're going to write for your next session while doing dishes or driving home from work? Can you talk on the phone while responding to a couple emails? Find what works for you to get things done and free up your time.

Speaking of time, setting a routine and to-do list greatly increases the amount of time you have, because you're actually setting intention for the time you have instead of letting it waste away with something you didn't plan on doing (like sleeping in, watching more episodes than you wanted to, etc.)

Ways you can set a good routine:

- Put tasks on your digital or physical calendar
- Use digital or physical bullet journals
- Track small goals within larger goals for motivation
- Make a daily/weekly/yearly to-do list
- Set alarms
- Give yourself incentives in your routine
- Keep your planner out in the open so you can easily refer to and update it
- Create very specific checklists for each task
- Organize your to-do list by similar tasks

Another essential way to set yourself up for success for the day is to create a “wake-up” and “wind down” routine. Here's how mine looks:

Wake Up Routine: 5:15 AM

- Don't press snooze (and don't scroll on phone!!)
- Do some light stretching
- Take care of pets
- Make tea/coffee
- Make/eat breakfast and read daily affirmations
- Brush teeth
- Meditate
- Shower
- Get ready for work

Wind down routine: 8:30/9 PM

- Have nighttime tea
- Change into PJs
- Brush teeth

- Prepare for next day (clothes, lunch, schedule)
- Read
- In bed by 10 PM
- Don't scroll on phone!!

Obviously, I have a wake up alarm, but I also have a “get ready for bed” alarm on my phone at 9 PM to remind myself to start winding down. This will ensure I don't stay up too late, mindlessly watching Netflix and playing games on my phone, then going to bed later than I wanted to, waking up groggy and crabby in the morning, and getting a rough start to my day. My alarm tells me, “Hey Holly, start on track!” In the morning, I start my day off feeling accomplished and refreshed, ready to tackle writing or work.

You'll want to choose consistent times for your routine, whether you're a morning or evening person. Then find your keystone habit, the one thing you want to get done that day that you will choose to do during your prime productive time, which will create a domino effect on other habits you want to instill.

Of course, you can also set alarms to remind yourself when you want to write. Set them according to your schedule each day, then when that music starts playing, get to your words!

Other ways to set yourself up for success include creating accountability. Whether that's finding a writing buddy to sprint with online or posting your word count on social media every day, find a way to be held accountable and responsible for your goals. It's okay to ask for help!

Lastly, make sure you have a kick-butt writing space. Make it your own, with positive quotes or character art on the walls, bookcases with an ever-growing TBR, plants, a nearby window for sunlight, a comfortable chair...the possibilities are endless! You want to enjoy your writing space, which will make you more likely to sit down and well, write!

 *End of Chapter Exercises*

What kind of routines do you want to adopt and why?

Plan your routines here! What will you do and when?

Writing Routine:

Chapter Five: Closing Thoughts

*"First, say to yourself what you would be;
And then do what you have to do."
— Epictetus*

You made it! You've completed this workbook, hopefully with more mental clarity and inner strength, and with a lighted fire that will burn forever and help you crush your writer goals. I want to remind you that this workbook is not for one-time use. It's a sustainable tool that you can use to continuously improve your life. The writer life is filled with ups and downs, and you might find yourself struggling with different things along the way. So, you can come back to a specific section and use it as a magnifying glass to inspect and change the certain aspect of your life you want to work on. Whether or not you notice any specific struggles, I recommend checking-in with yourself with this workbook every couple months to make sure you stay on track and remain what I hope you have become:

A Happy Balanced Writer



Acknowledgements

Thank you to my Mastermind Group: Savannah J. Goins, Brittany Wang, and Alicia Grumley, for giving me all of your wisdom and advice to make this workbook the best it could be! You girls are the best!

Thank you to my twin sister, Heather, for motivating me via Skype to work on this workbook. I couldn't do any of this without you.

And thank *you* for purchasing this workbook and for believing in this tool to improve your work/life balance and help you reach your goals.

Bio



Holly Davis is currently working as an outpatient physical therapist in Chicago. She is engaged to a great guy (wedding date TBD) and is a fur mom to a pitty and two kitties. She began her writing adventures as a young child and has grown from writing Kingdom Hearts fanfiction to writing stories of her own. She is currently querying her third manuscript, a YA urban fantasy with light sci-fi elements called *The Celestial Code*, which she hopes to traditionally publish as her debut novel.

Follow me on



@writehollydavis