

When I sit down to write, I like to have music playing to block out background noises. The kids' deep discussion on the pros and cons of horse racing, the husband's work meeting with people from around the world, or the neighbor's toddler gurgling with delight as he chases his ride on car around the court.

It's easy to be distracted by these things. Especially the adorable toddler who takes great glee in walking up the steep driveway behind his parents who hand him back his car before he shoves it down the hill again and toddles after it. His laughter is infectious. The delight of the moment etched across his face as he claps his hands and chases after the toy.

The washer sings its melodious tune to inform me it's completed. And the ear piercing shrill of the dryer when someone forgot to switch it to silent. The incessant buzz of voices, the tinny music from the nearby construction crew, and the traffic flying by on the highway create the hub of background noises that distract me when I throw open the window in my writing nook. No sooner do I pull my attention away from the construction guy gleefully singing opera as he rides the cherry picker up to the roof, then a siren wails in the distance, making me wonder if my loved ones are safe.

With the hubbub of noise, and the cluttered thoughts, it's hard to get in *the zone* and focus on writing. Even if I'm working on a project that I can't wait to delve into. The thing about being in *the zone* is, once I'm there, it's difficult to pull me out. I was once so deep in the zone that my husband walked clear past me twice to inform me company had arrived and I never saw him, much less heard him. Rather embarrassing when someone was standing in the kitchen waiting for me to explain all the weird gluten-free flours in the cupboard.

Being in *the zone* is how I tackle writing ten thousand words in a day. Don't gasp or pass out. I don't reach that number daily. That's a feat I save for November. The time of year my husband explains my distractions with "she's writing." And the kids add in hushed tones, "it's best not to bother her."

It's the sweet spot of writing that I aim for each day. That place where I'm so entrenched in what I'm writing, I forget I'm sitting in a chair hunched over a desk, with people occasionally whispering things like, "remember your posture." Or "Protect your back."

Getting there doesn't take as much effort as you might expect. I just need a full bottle of ice water, my current project before me, and the perfect music to make it all come together. I like to use concentration music, and I have a [playlist on Spotify](#) that is almost always on loop. There are no words to any of the songs I listen to, just endless music in different tempos.

Sometimes, I'll swerve from the norm and listen to a soundtrack from a movie. [Anne of Green Gables](#), for instance, is lovely and has a few great pieces if you want to write something really sad or full of joy. [The Hobbit](#) has this perfect piece of music if you're writing about going on an adventure. Whenever it comes on, I can literally see people skipping off down the path, going on their merry way to whatever adventure is currently calling them.

I have a [couple of concentration playlists](#) saved, but in all fairness, I come back to the same one over and over. I can't explain why, other than the music just puts me in *the zone*. All the other sounds meld away. No more thumping of the basketball as the neighborhood middle schoolers practice their hoop skills. No squealing little girls as they race around the court on their bikes. The booming laughter coming from the college kids across the street vanishes, and the neighborhood lawn mower is oddly silent as I slip my headphones on and begin typing.

This is where I get my best work done, and also my worst. It is there that I make typos that will make me laugh until I can't breathe as I reread my work the following morning. And it is there I scramble to jot down notes so I can expand scenes, characters, and story ideas. It is when I lose all sense of time, and am entrenched in the story, that I am most content.



Yes, I have really written ten thousand words in a day before. I don't aim for this feat often because it means leaving many important things by the wayside. But last November I wanted to beat my personal best in achieving the fifty-thousand words needed for [NaNoWriMo](#). Without realizing what I'd done, I conquered it in 5 days, and looking back over the stats [my](#)

writing program keeps, I realized I'd written ten thousand words each day.

Even when I'm in *the zone*, this isn't always possible. Only when I'm deeply entrenched in what I'm writing, and know my characters well enough to understand how they will respond in each situation they encounter. I can't worry about grammar or typos, or be distracted by research.

It also helps that my local writing group bands together each November to encourage everyone along their own personal path to success. This means at any hour of the day, someone might ask if people are available for a writing sprint. We set a timer for fifteen minutes, and write as fast as we can. Once, I failed epically at a sprint, much to the horror of my fellow writers. Why? I'd stopped to do some research.

It became quite the joke amongst our small band of writers over the course of the month, and to this day, when I think about penguins or squirrels, I smile, remembering how distracted I'd become.

The Reluctant Author

