

Getting Comfortable Informal Reflection

In order to write, I need my brain to be ready to write. For me, trying to force my brain to be in a space where it can write takes a huge amount of mental energy, almost double the amount of energy it takes to write itself. As a result, I use a few techniques to get my brain ready to write. Primarily, I take my adhd meds, which allows me to focus on writing as it regulates my dopamine. Now, I take my adhd meds every day, so it is not writing specific, but without my meds, it is extremely hard to get enough dopamine to start writing. My medication helps me with dopamine regulation, so that my dopamine levels are more similar to a neurotypical person's. The other two things I do to make sure my brain is able to write is by making sure my brain has fuel - I always need to have eaten that day before I write, and I drink water to make sure I am not dehydrated. All 3 of these give my brain the resources it needs to be able to write.

Next, before writing anything greater than two pages long, I take preventative measures to prevent physical harm and burnout that regularly accompanies writing for me. Writing, particularly typing, hurts my wrist. I have soft tissue inflammation and damage to my ligaments and tendons in my wrist due to overuse from both fencing and typing. My fencing coach says I have the wrists of an 80 year old. To mitigate the pain, I tape my wrist, or put on a brace. I prefer the tape, as it is more comfortable, but if I have no tape available I put on my wrist brace, which digs into my skin while I type but is still better than not having support on my wrist. Lastly, I take advil beforehand, but only if I remember to do so. The second measure is to plan out my breaks between writing sessions. I often hyperfixate on my writing, and will sit down and write for hours at a time, which leads to mental burnout. Pre-planning my breaks allows me to have a reminder while I am writing to take those breaks, allowing me to be productive for longer, and feel less drained at the end of writing.

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The final thing I do before I actually sit down to write is to limit external/physical stimulation around me. This includes tying my hair back (I tend to get overstimulated by my hair easily), and choosing an environment that is low stimulation. The perfect environment for me has natural lighting, not a lot of people moving around me, and is quiet. The quiet is less important, as I can use noise-blocking headphones, but it is still more ideal.

Then, after all that is done, I can finally sit down in my writing location. However, my prep is not quite yet done. First I have to set up my computer in the format that is most conducive for me for writing. I set up my prompt, any sources I have, and the document I am writing in as 3 full-screen tabs on separate “desktops” so I can easily switch between the three materials without other tabs distracting me. Once my computer is properly set up, I position my arms to limit injury to my wrist. Then, finally, I take a breath and mentally prepare myself to write.

For me, writing never requires quite as much setup, or intentional thought about my body, as it does for Laura Hershey for example. Hershey shows how, before she can start to write, her joints must “rest in comfortable positions” (p. 130), when she is finally comfortable enough to “start making choices” (p. 131) “each tissue inch holds it’s proper share of weight and pressure” (p. 130). To start writing, Hershey has to mentally evaluate every part of her body, and directly decide where those parts should go. For my writing setup, I don’t have to think about every part of my body as directly, as I have control over my body’s movement most of the time, whereas Hershey only has control over her body’s movement when someone else is in the room. However, we both have processes we do to allow our bodies to not hinder our minds.

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