

A Room of Your Own: Creating a Writing Space

What each of us finds the ideal writing environment varies widely, but generally it's a place that:

- Has everything we need readily at hand
- Has few distractions
- Is congenial to our personality and spirit

Sometimes the space is more virtual than real -- earphones with a CD to shut out the noise of a busy office, for example. Sometimes the critical element is idiosyncratic: BF Skinner had a special light on his desk that he turned on, and wrote, and turned off, and stopped writing; Schiller could only write if he put his feet in a pail of ice water.

Creating a place conducive to writing helps writing productivity in two ways:

- It makes it easier to write in the first place
- It becomes a *conditioned stimulus* for writing, so that when we return to that "place" the writing response kicks in more readily each time. Our writing brain actually learns to snap into action in these surroundings.

1. Think about a particular time when you enjoyed a writing project and carried it out with minimal stress and strain. Describe the place where you wrote, in as much detail as possible – the room itself, windows and what they looked out on, your writing area, your chair, what else was around you, the temperature, sounds – whatever comes to mind when you recall the experience.

2. On the other side: What could you do with your current writing space (or another one, if the usual one is hopeless) to re-create some of the feeling of the earlier space? What could you add? Remove? Change?