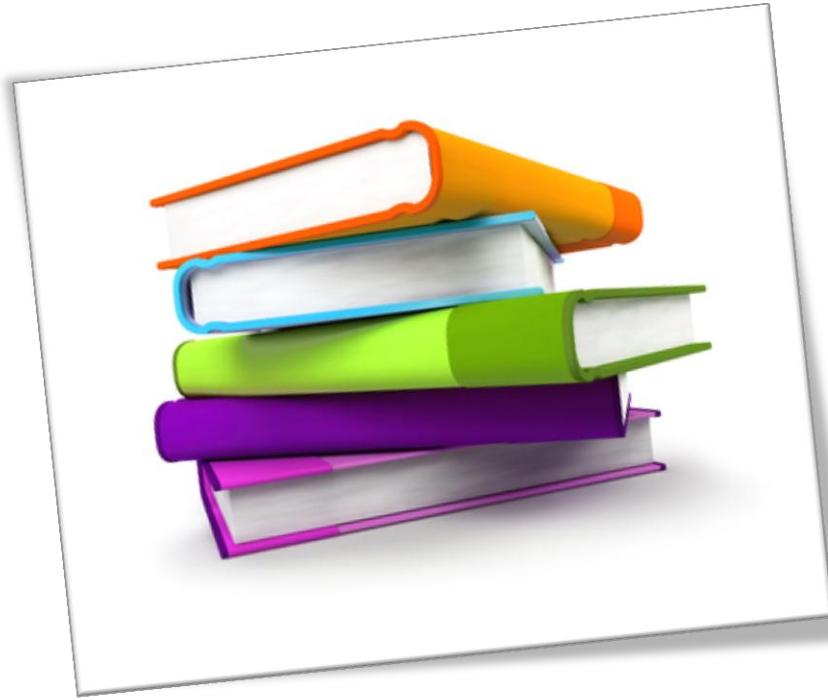


*Write Now!*

## Maximizing Your Creativity



*The Author Series from Praeclarus Press*



One of the most useful classes I ever took was “The Psychology of Creativity.” The professor, Teresa Amabile, now at Harvard Business School, has spent most of her career researching creativity. You may think creativity is only relevant to “creative types,” such as artists or musicians. But creativity is highly important in all types of work, and has special relevance to writers. So what are some things

that can kill creativity? Here is a summary of what Terri Amabile has found in her studies.

- **Lack of Autonomy:** When people don’t have control over what they do and how they do it, they are less likely to come up with creative solutions. For writers, this may mean that you don’t feel like you have control over content or style of what you write. To some extent, that’s always going to be the case in that you always have to write with the needs of your audience in mind. But perhaps what you need is the ability to control, a bit more, what you write.
- **Frequent Interruptions:** A workday that is constantly interrupted lowers creativity. Meetings, telephone and e-mail can all be sources of interruptions. These can be death for writers. Do what you can to minimize them.
- **Not Having the Right Tools or Resources:** Not having the tools, equipment or resources you need can hamper your creativity. Fortunately, the tools that writers require are (or can be) fairly simple. But make sure you have what you need.
- **Time Pressure:** Despite what you might think, creativity cannot flourish under constant time pressure. While time pressure can break through procrastination, deadline pressure keeps you from taking risks—and that limits creativity. For writers, deadlines can be good. But you may find that you do some of your best work when you have time to play with your words for a bit before turning in the final product.

- **Hierarchical or Rigid Management Structure:** Being able to collaborate with others is a great way to be more creative. When everyone is protecting their own turf, however, there are few chances to be creative.
- **Fear of Failure:** Being afraid of making mistakes can also kill creative approaches. Some of this fear may be directly from the milieu of your job. Or it may come from your misguided beliefs about the need to always be perfect. Either way, it can be harmful. For writers, this means focusing on your goals for writing rather than the reaction you expect to get. I've seen many a writer who becomes absolutely paralyzed by thinking about that nasty review that awaits his or her work. To the extent possible, try to ban that from your thinking while you work. You can deal with the consequences later (and really, what's the worst thing that will happen?).

## What You Can Do

There are some steps you can take to increase your creativity in the work place.

- **Be Proactive:** In order to counteract areas where you lack autonomy, try to figure out what areas you do have control over, and start there. People do not perform well when they are micromanaged. If this continues to be a problem, you may need to have a frank talk with the people involved. Fortunately, this is something you can generally control.
- **Create Pockets of Uninterrupted Time:** Since interruptions can hamper creativity, do what you can to create uninterrupted time—especially when working on something that requires creative thought. This may mean coming in early, staying late, working from home, or putting a “do not disturb” sign on your door. I've been known to take writing holidays when I really need to get something done. If you can swing it, a couple of days on your own can really help. But even as little as an afternoon alone and away from your normal routine may be just what you need to get things moving for you.
- **Avoid Time Pressure:** As you become more organized, you'll be less susceptible to deadline pressure. Realize that constantly working under deadline pressure is not in the best interest of your creative work. On the other hand, deadlines can at least get you moving. From there, you can do things to help you be more creative.
- **Learn to Collaborate with Others:** Try to establish a team approach. One plus one really does equal three when it comes to creative solutions. If you haven't done so already, learn to cultivate relationships with others who share your passion. Even if they just share the occasional encouraging word, it may be all you need to get your creative juices flowing again.

Nurturing your creative self can make your work more enjoyable, increase your abilities, and make you the writer you've always wanted to be. It is well worth your efforts to make your work as good as it can be. And that means enlisting your innate creative abilities. Do it today. I think you'll be amazed at what you can do.

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