

GIVE IT A WEEK!

by

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'Give it a week' is a piece of advice I heard many years ago when I was starting out as a freelance writer. I believe the phrase is commonly used in advertising agencies, though as I've never worked in one of these myself I can't confirm this – I simply read it in a book, the rest of which I've long forgotten.

Anyway, the idea behind the expression is that, before signing off any piece of work, you should put it to one side for a week. When you return to it, with fresh eyes you are almost bound to see ways in which it can be improved.

Of course, in our frenetic world, you may not always have a week to spare – but even if you can only give it a day, the principle still applies.

I have always tried to apply this guideline in my writing, and when I haven't I've often regretted it. I think there are two reasons why it is such a worthwhile principle to follow.

First, you return to the project with fresh eyes. It's a well-known fact that if you spend hours continuously working on a project, you become so close to it you no longer see 'obvious' mistakes and infelicities - e.g. repetition of the same long word within a couple of sentences. This is otherwise known as the 'can't see the wood for the trees' phenomenon.

But, even more important, if you leave the project for a while, you give your intuitive right brain the chance to come up with its own suggestions. Readers of my course 'Write Any Book in Under 28 Days' will know that I'm a big believer in the right brain, left brain theory - the idea that we all have in effect two brains, a rational, logical left brain and an intuitive right one.

The right brain cannot communicate directly the way the left brain does – instead it works by sending ideas bubbling through in dreams and moments of inspiration. Giving the right brain time and space to work often results in better ideas than if you just sit down and try to complete an entire project in one sitting.

Personally, I find that a lot of my best ideas come when I am doing something totally unconnected to writing. Best of all, for some bizarre reason, is mowing the lawn, but shopping, walking and driving are also good. On the other hand, I can't say I have ever had any especially good ideas whilst watching TV – I think it's because television occupies all our senses and drowns out any attempt by our intuitive right brain to communicate with us.

Anyway, my main point is, when you think you've finished any writing project, if you possibly can, set it to one side for a week, then return to it for a final revision. I'll be amazed if you don't find mistakes you didn't notice before, and sections you can polish and sharpen.

If you don't have a week, give it a day at least, but any break before tackling the final version is better than none. Otherwise, I can guarantee that, soon after pressing the 'Send' button, you will think of at least three ways the work in question could have been improved!

Nick Daws is a best-selling author living in Staffordshire, England. You can discover his exciting course "How to Write Any Book in 28 Days – OR LESS!" online at <http://www.writequickly.com/>