

Time-saving tips

By Eric
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For many journalists, it can take forever to get the right interviews, then the interviews themselves can take forever. Then there's the time you spend transcribing the tapes of those interviews, not to mention that you've got a bunch of articles all due on the same day. My God, how can it even be done? Well, not by freaking out — here's some timesaving strategies that will have you taking an afternoon nap while all the other writers prepare for all-nighters:

Don't wait on interviews.

Unless you're interviewing the only expert on the subject you're covering, you should have calls going into at least five different sources. Though it's very easy for one person not to get back to you the same day, the chances of five people all being busy is not very likely. And if they all get back to you, your editor will love the fact you had extra sources in your story. A no-lose situation.

Take a typing class.

If you can't type faster than people talk, then you have to take a speed-typing class. I can't remember how many times I watched fellow journalists press rewind on their tapes for hours while I had long since turned in my story. Also, typing fast means sources won't feel compelled to talk slower, something that may be polite but also has a tendency to stop their train of thought right in its tracks.

Do assignments on short deadlines.

One of the best ways to waste time on stories is to have a lot of time to do them. By training yourself to be comfortable doing stories in only a few days, or eventually a few hours, it will force you to see how efficient you can be.

Author admission: Some of my best work has been done on quick turnaround.

Hit your weakness first.

Most fitness trainers will tell you to hit your weakest body part first in the gym, because you always have the most energy when you start your workout. The same can hold true in writing. Whether it's writing your lede, or calling for interviews, or doing a rewrite, take on that beast first or you may have to deal with the ultimate timewaster: procrastination.

uinely interested in them. But you can do that in a few minutes, instead of 50. Also, sources are likely to call you back for future articles when they know you'll only take five to 10 minutes of their time as opposed to most of their lunch hour.

Learn to say no.

Since the financial recession of the journalism business, many scribes have felt saying no to an article simply isn't possible. But remember this: Even with these time-saving tips, you can only take on so much. Although it may hurt to

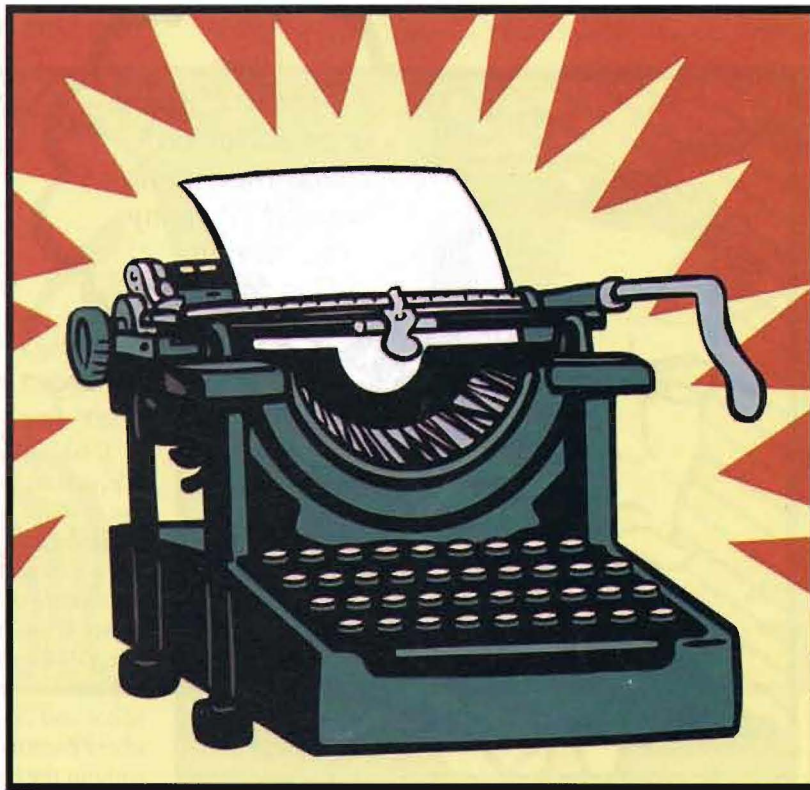
turn down a \$1,500 article, if you know that magazine will require endless revisions during a time when your calendar's already full, you just have to say no. It's better to lose a little money than risk being late on five other pieces to squeeze it all in. Remember, even the best writers can be one missed deadline away from missing out on future assignments.

The write time.

Whether you're on staff or working from a home office, distractions abound. Instant messaging, publicists and coffee breaks all demand your time, but writing demands a certain amount of discipline for best results. Unless the one signing your checks needs your attention right away, try to

set aside a certain time in the day that's strictly for writing, and then do it. Despite how easy writing can be sometimes, it also can be a difficult process and needs space to happen.

On the other hand, that baby won't change itself...



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Time your interviews.

Other than when you're doing a 2,000-word Q&A, there's no reason to be spending tons of time interviewing each of your sources. If you are, it means you're not asking the right questions, you're being a little too chatty or you're letting your source get off the subject. Listen to the tape of your interviews to see where the "jabbering" is occurring, so you can quickly correct it. Don't misunderstand me: Always treat your source like a person and be gen-

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