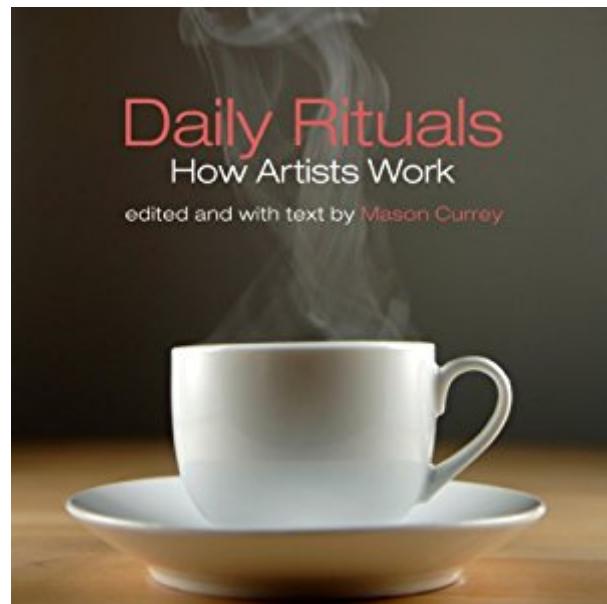


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# Daily Rituals: How Artists Work



## Synopsis

Franz Kafka, frustrated with his living quarters and day job, wrote in a letter to Felice Bauer in 1912, "time is short, my strength is limited, the office is a horror, the apartment is noisy, and if a pleasant, straightforward life is not possible then one must try to wriggle through by subtle maneuvers." Kafka is one of 161 inspired - and inspiring - minds, among them, novelists, poets, playwrights, painters, philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians, who describe how they subtly maneuver the many (self-inflicted) obstacles and (self-imposed) daily rituals to get done the work they love to do, whether by waking early or staying up late; whether by self-medicating with doughnuts or bathing, drinking vast quantities of coffee, or taking long daily walks. Thomas Wolfe wrote standing up in the kitchen, the top of the refrigerator as his desk, dreamily fondling his "male configurations..." Jean-Paul Sartre chewed on Corydrane tablets (a mix of amphetamine and aspirin), ingesting ten times the recommended dose each day... Descartes liked to linger in bed, his mind wandering in sleep through woods, gardens, and enchanted palaces where he experienced "every pleasure imaginable." Here are: Anthony Trollope, who demanded of himself that each morning he write three thousand words (250 words every fifteen minutes for three hours) before going off to his job at the postal service, which he kept for thirty-three years during the writing of more than two dozen books...Karl Marx...Woody Allen...Agatha Christie...George Balanchine, who did most of his work while ironing...Leo Tolstoy...Charles Dickens...Pablo Picasso...George Gershwin, who, said his brother Ira, worked for twelve hours a day from late morning to midnight, composing at the piano in pajamas, bathrobe, and slippers... Here also are the daily rituals of Charles Darwin, Andy Warhol, John Updike, Twyla Tharp, Benjamin Franklin, William Faulkner, Jane Austen, Anne Rice, and Igor Stravinsky (he was never able to compose unless he was sure no one could hear him and, when blocked, stood on his head to "clear the brain"). Brilliantly compiled and edited, and filled with detail and anecdote, Daily Rituals is irresistible, addictive, and magically inspiring.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Daily Rituals: How Artists Work by Mason Currey (Editor) This book is a hard one to review because of what it is. This is a meticulously researched work on the work habits of writers, composers, artists and other creative types. He pulls this information from existing sources, biographies, autobiographies and personal journals. If you are looking for this type of detailed information, than this book easily could merit a five star review. Currey does a great job presenting this information, presumably sifting through mounds of notes, interviews and books to capture the essence of the artists work habits. There are almost 30 pages of footnotes for this book. I took a lot of notes while reading this book and I will post the writing life tidbits out on my twitter feed as #authorfacts in the next few weeks. In a purely unscientific assessment of these habits, I can present to you a summary of what I learned here: Artists work first thing in the morning to get it out of the way early so they can go about their day. 113 out of the 161 artists profiled (or 70.2% of them) began work in the morning, and many of the late-rising artists also began work as one of their first activities of the day in the afternoon or night time, but the overwhelming majority of artists woke in the morning and got to work within 2 hours of waking. Most of them followed a strict daily work schedule working for a set number of hours, (typically anywhere from 3 to 6 hours) or until they hit a goal word count (usually 1000 to 1500 words). Many artists drank or smoked to excess, all ultimately having a negative impact on their work. Another popular excess: coffee.

As an author, I found "Daily Rituals: How Artists Work" by Mason Currey thoroughly fascinating, engaging, and entertaining. I had a great time reading this little gem of a book. I would recommend it to any writer, artist, or creative person. It's a simple book that contains over 150 short profiles of famous artists. Some of these may only be a half page in length, while the longest of them might take 2-3 pages. All of them contain interesting facts about the person being profiled, with a theme centered on the artist's daily rituals, or routines. You'll find many were early risers, but that others worked at night and slept in. Some used stimulants to help them work, while others didn't. Some adhered to rigid schedules, and others were much more haphazard with their approach to work. The one thing you can take away from this book for sure is that there is no one single best routine to

creativity. The rituals and routines are as unique and different as the works the artists created. However, another thing you can take away from this book is that those who created, did in fact make time to create and there was a lot of "butt-in-the-chair" time as we writers sometimes call it. (Except for those who wrote standing up.) Not only did I find this book an enjoyable read, but a very motivating one as well. Reading about the rituals of other artists, especially some of those I've admired, motivated me to work on my projects even more. The author did an excellent job at researching the individual artists in this book, and included enough to make it a great read, but also to stimulate me to do further research on some of those profiled here. Bottom line - I thought this book was outstanding.

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