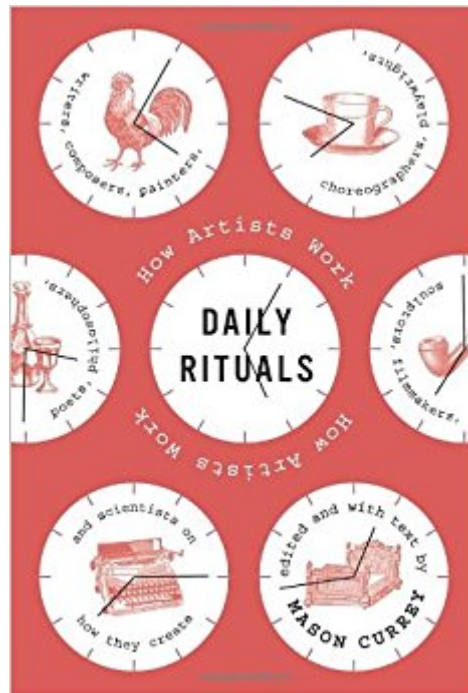




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# Daily Rituals: How Artists Work



## 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, magically inspiring.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A Look Inside Daily Rituals [Click here for a larger image](#) [Click here for a larger image](#) [Click here for a larger image](#)

Writers and artists are always asked about their process, including the crucial question, “How do you do meaningful creative work while also earning a living?” Currey set out to amass as much information as he could find about the routines “brilliant and successful” creators adopted and followed, and the result is a zestful survey of the working habits of “some of the greatest minds of the last four hundred years.” This zealous and judicious volume brims with quotes and fascinating disclosures about the vagaries of the creative life. Currey outs the habits of nearly 200 choreographers, comedians, composers, caricaturists, filmmakers, philosophers, playwrights, painters, poets, scientists, sculptors, and writers in a dizzying array that includes Benjamin Franklin, Henri Matisse, Nikola Tesla, Stephen King, Twyla Tharp, Federico Fellini, Ann Beattie, Gustav Mahler, and Toni Morrison. Here are early birds and night owls, the phenomenally rigorous and the nearly dysfunctional. George Balanchine thought things out while ironing. Maya Angelou writes sequestered in a “tiny, mean” hotel room. Marilynne Robinson confesses, “I really am incapable of discipline.” Currey’s compendium is elucidating and delectable. --Donna Seaman

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. The one thing I wish this book would have done was to interview more contemporary authors, a lot of these artists are dead and from the 19th and early 20th century. Although the book contains some writers from the late 20th Century, the majority of these are of the Baby Boomer generation, and I'd be curious to see the daily rituals of Generation X or Millennial authors, and how they handle the distraction-rich, socially interconnected world of the 21st century. I think this information is out there and available, and maybe even easier to collect and write about, so I was disappointed that this wasn't captured. I also couldn't figure out how the book was organized. The artists were not classified by the medium or subject area, and not in alphabetical or chronological order. The profiles seem to be completely random, and considering the audience for this book, I think it would have better been served by some sort of organizational structure to make it easier to look up a particular artist, time period or profession. But the book is what it is. It is a solid, well-researched work of an obscure, somewhat academic subject, and although this is fascinating to a writer such as myself, I'm not sure the book can hold the interest of someone not specifically looking for this type of information, and I'm not sure it could hold the interest of writers and other artists not specifically interested in this aspect of the creative process. Rating: \*\*\* Buy Used \$17.46 Hardcover, or \$12.99 Kindle eBook About Ratings: \*\*\*\*\* -- Well Worth it at Full Retail Price; \*\*\*\* -- Buy on Sale/Discounted; \*\*\* -- Buy Used; \*\* -- Borrow It from the Library; \* -- Waste of a Good Tree

Great book! Each short essay is readable in five to ten minutes. Currey describes the daily routines--occasionally lack of routine--that enabled these creators to change the world. In addition to the obvious enjoyment one derives from reading about famous people, there are real lessons to be learned about productivity and the creative process. I've read this book cover to cover several times. It is a nice bed table book.

I have had this book on my wish list for quite some time. Finally treated myself to it and it really has been a treat. It is fascinating to me as I explore ways to make my own creative time more fruitful to see what others have done. It is nice to see that the struggle to sit down and 'get to it' has been universal to anyone with important work to do. Many of the ideas I have read recently over the past few years that have been backed by study and research were seemingly discovered by many on their own even a hundred years ago. This gem is going on my shelf of favorites.

Excellent book for those readers who want to get a glimpse into the schedules of extraordinary talented artists...namely, that even true masters have to find the mundane ritual of daily routine a necessity when creating great work. The creative process is often thought of as elusive and transient, however this book goes to great lengths to show how a steady working schedule can often lead to some of the modern world's greatest creative achievements. Very inspiring for those wanting to create some kind of art in their day...

I LOVE this book! I'm a singer/songwriter, and it's been incredibly inspiring to read how other artists, composers, authors, poets, and other creative types structured their lives and work environments. There's a huge diversity in how these artists worked...- Some rise early, some are night owls- Some drink coffee, some drink alcohol, some excessively drink both- Some have grand social lives, others are borderline hermits- Some worked on their art 18 hours a day, others had day jobs and could only squeeze in a half hour of creative workAll in all, each bio is short (maybe two or three pages), and they're typically quite entertaining. I feel this book has helped me to work at my art better!

This book is pretty decent. It is definitely fun to get the behind the scenes look at authors, painters, musicians etc. but the book ends up becoming repetitive. I was not expecting the book to be so small and I did not realize how short each passage was going to be(anywhere from 1 paragraphs to 2 pages). This is more of a coffee table book than one you would sit down and actively read.Either way it is interesting and you start to notice patterns among artists, like how many rely on drugs/alcohol or how most of them barely take time off.

I appreciate how many different artist the author includes here. It shows a wide range of talent at work and the vast amount of differences in what creative types do to get the work done. I enjoyed reading it, very short chapters, if you could even call them that, quick bio's that cut right to the

routines. It was handy to have my iPad close as a few writers I was not familiar with and would have liked at least a mention of their most notable works. This info was included in some but not all of the essays. The artists included were also heavily stacked with writers, followed by composers. I would have preferred more visual artists but that is just a personal bias. I also would have liked to see more living artist included. The author relies mostly on diaries, biographers and oral second hand accounts for the information presented, interviews with living artists would be perhaps more relevant to our times. It's a bit discouraging how many prolific artist past had meals all prepared for them, maids and typists, etc. Maybe a sequel! Even with these wants I found the book enjoyable and fun to read.

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