

The Writer's Guide to Monsters



How to whisper the top 5 Writing Monsters



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The Monster Whisperer

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Have no time – but need to write?

How to whisper the Time Monster & write your book!

The time management plan tailor-made for frustrated writers!

Are you working instead of writing your book?

How to whisper the Office Monster & write more often!

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Meet the Writing Monsters

Why are they so dangerous?

Writing a book is a bit like camping in the forest with a bunch of Monsters.

It doesn't matter whether you're writing your first novel or your seventh, a TV script, or a manual on bee-keeping.

Whatever you're working on, the Writing Monsters always arrive when it's time to write. They lurk hungrily under the trees, ready to feed on your precious time and energy.

Before you know it, you're covered in scratches and bruises. The constant howling is making you distinctly nervous, and writing is suddenly starting to look a lot like hard work.

This e-book will help you identify five of the nastiest Writing Monsters out there. (And I'm afraid there are plenty more!) Once you know their ways, you'll learn some fast techniques for getting their claws out of your manuscript – and your life.

Like all Writing Monsters, these five beasts *can* be whispered. All it takes is a little knowledge, and a strong desire to finish that book!

Let's take a closer look at these dangerous creatures...



1 The Time Monster

There's more time to write than you think...

The Time Monster's always hungry. All he ever thinks about is eating. Unfortunately, his favorite food is your precious time, and he can never get enough of it.

Is the Time Monster hunting you?



You'll know a Time Monster's circling if:

- You always mean to get back to your writing, but somehow never quite manage it.
- You're really busy, but don't seem to be achieving much – especially on your writing.
- In a typically busy week, your writing is the first thing to be sacrificed.
- It's been weeks (or even months) since you last checked in with your manuscript.
- There's dust on top of your current draft, and you can't really remember what you covered in your last writing session.

Sound familiar...?



The worst way to deal with this Monster is to ignore him. He's not going anywhere. And when he finally takes a break from feasting on your time, you'll find it's been ages since you last did some serious writing.

You're now way out of touch with your manuscript, and getting back to it looks impossible.

After all, you don't have time, right?

Wrong!

How to whisper the Time Monster

Here are 5 whispering techniques you can use right now.

- **Log your time**

How do you actually spend your time? Where does it all go, anyway? Keep a time log for a week, and you may be very surprised at what you really do with your time. Once you know where it goes, you can ask some key questions: What can you stop doing? What can you delegate to someone else? What tasks don't really matter but you spend time doing them out of habit?

- **Get a diary or wall planner**

Take control of your time by scheduling it. Block off regular times to write – planning in advance can reduce this Monster's ability to launch surprise attacks on your time.



- **Commit to your new writing schedule**

Change the way you think about your writing time. When you block out an hour or two to write, try looking at that period as a concrete, confirmed appointment to make progress on your writing.

After all, you honor the appointments you make with your doctor or dentist, and this is just as important.

- **Be creative – and assertive – with your time**

Look around at your day job, and identify the many “legal” writing moments that exist. In any average work day, there are several official breaks you can legitimately use for your real career.

The free articles at Monster-Whisperer.com offer more ideas on where to find these pockets of time.

- **Prioritize your writing**

At least once a week, put your writing first.

Before the chores. Before talking on the phone or answering emails. Before watching some old re-run on TV.

Write for an hour before your day fills up with demands, commitments and distractions.



2 The Image Monster

Yes, that *is* a writer in the mirror

The Image Monster will watch you quietly from a distance, until he sees your insecurities. And then he's on you – lightning fast – attacking you where it will hurt the most.

Who are you to call yourself a writer? he asks mockingly. *Don't you work in an office?*

If this Monster's stalking you, he'll be whispering these negative messages into your ear night and day. Before you know it, you're starting to doubt your talent, and feeling embarrassed that you ever really thought of yourself as a Writer.

Is the Image Monster hunting you?



You'll know the Image Monster has his claws into you if:

- A routine rejection from a publisher makes you savagely depressed. (Is this confirmation that you have no talent?)
- When you read interviews with famous writers you feel angry and jealous of their success. (Are they better than you?)
- You go long periods between writing because, really, what's the point?
- Writing is becoming harder and more tortuous instead of fulfilling. (Maybe you don't have what it takes after all...)



- You've started finding fault with every new book you read. (Who do these writers think they are, anyway?)

The worst way to deal with this Monster is to wallow in self-pity, and join in the chorus of negativity. Feelings of frustration are simply part of the writing process. A sense of perspective is needed here – and quickly.

How to whisper the Image Monster

- **Consciously shift your focus from how you've "failed" to how you've succeeded**

List your 5 most stunning achievements – from any area of your life. When have you done "the impossible," overcome all odds, and surprised even yourself with your achievements?

These moments are proof of your potential and talent.

Dwell on them.

- **Move from shouting to listening**

Rather than railing how unfair it is that other writers are finding success, listen to them talk about how they achieved their goals.

Is there a work habit, an approach, a mindset that you could adopt, too?

How can you pattern on their success?

What can they teach you?



- **Celebrate your successes – big and small**

When you finish a chapter, mark the day: go out to dinner, open a bottle of wine.

When you smooth out a wrinkle in your plot that's been bothering you for months, let your writing group or a supportive person know.

These moments are further proof that you're making progress – acknowledge this forward movement with a ritual of celebration.

- **Negativity is a habit that can be broken**

Catch yourself every time you say something dismissive or sarcastic about your writing or your talent. Replace negative self-talk with positive statements that affirm your talent rather than undermine it.

When you write a sparkling sentence, for example, say out loud, *That's fantastic! It reads so well! I'm good at this!*

- **Choose your critics carefully**

It can be a huge mistake to show your work in progress to critical friends or colleagues – even if they're well meaning.

A word of thoughtless criticism at the wrong moment can be utterly crushing. Share your ideas with people who understand how vulnerable you are during the writing process. Tell them you are looking for constructive comments only!



3 The Office Monster

You may have a job, but you're still a writer!

If you're holding down a job while working on a manuscript, you're already on intimate terms with the Office Monster. You know he's a whining, demanding daily companion who wants as much of your time and energy as you'll give him.



Is the Office Monster hunting you?

You'll know the Office Monster is feeding on your time and energy if:

- You never think about your manuscript from Monday to Friday.
- You think about your job more often than your writing. Long after the work day is over, you're reliving a highlights reel in your head.
- You spend a lot of time on distractions or rewards for putting up with your job. This leaves no time or energy left over for writing.
- You're losing touch with your writing project. The world of work is becoming more compelling than the world of your novel.
- You can't remember what it feels like to write a really great piece of prose.

The worst way to deal with the Office Monster is to surrender your identity to him.

You're *not* an office worker – first and foremost, you're a writer!



How to whisper the Office Monster

- **Regain your perspective**

Take a step back and look at the office world. Is getting involved with office gossip, and going out for drinks with colleagues you don't actually like helping you make progress on your real career?

If it is, great! (Maybe it counts as field research.)

If it's not, maybe it's time to stop immersing yourself in the minutiae of the office world.

- **Draw a line between the end of the work day, and your own time**

At 5 o'clock, the work day is done. Don't let the Office Monster step over that line, and into your real life. With a day job, you need only invest the required hours to get your paycheck – at 5pm your daily commitment is over.

- **Learn how to write at work**

It's not necessary to check your creativity at the office door.

Uncover the many writing opportunities that exist in every day job, and use them. Taking back control of your working day is incredibly liberating.

There are plenty of ways to write at work without getting fired. The free articles at Monster-Whisperer.com will give you more ideas.

- **Look around for raw material**

In every office, there's always something you can use for your real work. Look at your surroundings, your workmates, the routines and traditions. What can you use to add a spark of realism to your work?



- **Understand your relationship with this Monster**

Remember that the Office Monster pays the bills and rent while you work on your real career. It's a relationship of convenience, and nothing more.

He's simply not worthy of too much of your time or energy – that was never part of the agreement.



4 The Lonely Monster

Why write in solitary confinement?

The Lonely Monster's pretty quiet, all things considered. He doesn't have a deafening roar, or tear you apart with his long, razor-sharp claws. He prefers to gnaw away at you – gently, bit by bit – when you're not looking.

As you already know, it takes a miracle to create some regular peaceful, quiet writing time when your life is very busy.

But when the Lonely Monster strikes, you suddenly stop feeling like a strong and self-reliant writer working away happily in the solitude you've moved heaven and earth to create. When the Lonely Monster's done his work, you look around and notice not solitude, not peace – but empty, echoing silence.

Where did everyone go?



Is the Lonely Monster hunting you?

You'll know the Lonely Monster is growling quietly in the corner if:

- You start to feel a sense of dread rather than excitement when you clear a quiet block of time for writing.
- Sitting at your desk, you look out the window at the passing world, and feel panicky and abandoned.



- You wonder if other people find writing this hard! (Is there something wrong with you?)
- You wonder if anyone else even notices what you're trying to achieve – and how difficult it is!
- You're losing sight of whether you're doing great work – or substandard stuff.

The worst way to handle the Lonely Monster is to wallow in self-pity. Writing's a solitary activity, by definition. That's a given.

But working on your own is not the same as being completely alone, and having to cope without support. Writing is not supposed to be a form of torture.

Sources of support are everywhere; you just need to reach out for them.

How to whisper the Lonely Monster

- **Join an online forum (or two)**

Search the internet for forums in your particular area of writing style or interest. There are so many writers out there who are struggling with the same issues as you – who better to share your challenges with than someone who truly understands the nature of the beast?



- **Look for noise!**

Meeting up with a friend in a noisy place is an instant and dramatic antidote to the silence of solitary writing. Have coffee or a drink with a chatty friend in a mall, a café, a bar.

Being surrounded by people can be a refreshing change of pace from all that one-on-one time with your computer.

- **Join a local writing group**

I bet there are at least a couple of writer groups in your local area that meet regularly, to share ideas and feedback. Check your local newspaper or community websites to find one that appeals to you.

Who knows; there could be a fellow writer grappling with her first novel just a few streets away...

- **Pick up the phone**

If you just need a quick break from all the peace and quiet, choose a friend, colleague, or long-lost aunt you've been meaning to call, and call them for a chat. Reaching out to someone else reminds you have the power to remedy feelings of loneliness any time you want to.

- **Write in a public place**

Every now and then, it can be helpful to write in a library, a café, or a park bench. Seeing that everyone is just going about their business reminds you that you're connected to the human race.

Solitude is a choice you make in order to achieve your writing goals.

It's not a permanent state – or a jail sentence.



5 The Goal Monster

Set a goal – achieve the dream

The Goal Monster likes it when you're vague about your writing objectives.

He *loves* to listen to you making general plans about your writing future.

Especially when you wander over to the TV instead of sitting down to finish drafting a chapter of your novel.



Is the Goal Monster hunting you?

You know the Goal Monster has been gnawing on your ankle if:

- You're not really sure how much you've done on your manuscript – or how much more work is involved in finishing it.
- You seem to have been working on your current project for years – but you don't seem to be getting anywhere.
- You've never really thought about how your finished book will look – how many words, chapters, or twists and turns are enough?
- You're sick of rewriting the same scene over and over again – it just never seems to be "right".
- You're starting to wonder if you were really cut out for this writing stuff – it never seems to lead anywhere.



The worst way to deal with this Monster is to put off making concrete goals.

The Goal Monster knows that if you never get clear about your objectives, your writing dream will only ever be a fantasy – a beautiful idea you have of your ideal future.

He knows that to make your dream into a reality, you need to make a detailed plan, and then act on it.

How to whisper the Goal Monster

Set aside some quiet, uninterrupted time to make some crystal clear decisions about what you want out of your writing.

- **Start with the big picture**

What does success look like to you? If it's a published novel, what style or genre is it? How long is it? What will the cover look like? Where will it be sold? Who publishes books like yours? Who will buy it?

You need to know exactly what you want before you can work out how to get it. This is your overall goal.

- **Where are you now?**

Imagine you're on a road and heading towards achieving the above goal.

Where are you right now?

How many words do you have? How many do you need?

Once you know what you want, and how far you have to go to reach that goal, you can plot a course for that destination



- **How will you get to your major goal?**

Let's say you want to have a full first draft manuscript in 12 months' time.

How many words per month would you have to write to get to this stage?

Could this be done in those 12 months?

If not, extend the deadline. Work out how many words are realistic for you to achieve per month.

- **Map the goals to monthly deadlines**

Once you have a monthly target for how many words you'll write, you can start planning when you'll write them.

Look at your schedule, and add in chunks of writing time.

Make a plan, and schedule it now.

- **Note your progress**

As you achieve each of these smaller monthly goals, reward yourself. You're moving towards your overall goal in a regular, measurable way.

Keep track of your progress, and use your forward motion to keep building momentum.



So now you've met the five Monsters who are most likely to stand in the way of your writing dream.

Not so scary when you know what to look for, and how to tame them, are they?





About the Author

Liz Hardy – the Monster Whisperer – is a freelance writer and online trainer. She holds a PhD in English, and qualifications in Journalism, Research and Business.

Liz has published several books and works with words every day. She knows that writing obstacles can quickly grow into Monsters that threaten your creative goals.

After many struggles with Writing Monsters big and small, she's found out just what it takes to get them under control.

She shares her taming secrets at Monster-Whisperer.com.



Need more help to keep writing while the Monsters howl?

The Monster Whisperer can help! Writer-friendly resources include:

- [Monster Whispering for Writers](#) – the monthly newsletter
- [Free writing articles](#) tackling specific problems
- [Monster e-books](#) full of whispering solutions
- [Weekly Tips](#) – write more with these practical ideas