

10 Power Principles to Screenwriting Success

by [Derek Rydall, author of I Could've Written a Better Movie Than That!](#)

Bring your screenwriting up to the power level with these 10 quick-reference tips from author/screenwriter/script consultant Derek Rydall.

1. DO SOMETHING PRODUCTIVE EVERY DAY

Write something every day – whether it's your project or an assignment. If you find yourself stuck just staring at a blank screen, try staring at a great script instead -- and try to figure out how it's put together. It might inspire you to get your own writing done. The point here is to keep exercising and refining your craft, building your knowledge, and keeping the momentum – all of which will give you a competitive edge. This isn't about becoming a workaholic. It's about breaking through the inertia of complacency. It's so easy to get comfortable, to settle for the status quo, to rationalize why you're not doing what you know you need to in order to succeed. "I don't feel like it," is not a viable excuse anymore.

2. TAKE FREQUENT BREAKS

This may sound like a contradiction to the above habit. It's not. In fact, without this one, you won't be able to sustain the level of quality and productivity referred to above. Unless you're able to take a break (whether it's ten minute, an hour, a day, or a week) and recharge, you'll soon be booking a room in burnout city.

3. GET ORGANIZED

A messy, disorganized office is an energy sapper if there ever was one. Not just because it takes longer to find that important document under that stack of unopened bills, but also because it literally pulls power from your psychic field. Every little 'toleration' you put up with burns fuel that could be put to much better use in growing your business.

4. WORK WHEN YOU WORK BEST

Some of us are morning people. Others are struck with the muse at the stroke of midnight. If you don't already know, find out what time of day you work best, and gear your most labor-intensive activities for that time period. (Of course, if you're on a deadline, you might have to work around

the clock, but that's a different issue.) If you schedule your activities based on your energy cycles, you will find your productivity take a quantum leap.

For example, I have two periods when I work the best – late morning and late afternoon. So I try to schedule the heavy-lifting (writing, analyzing) during those hours. When I first get up, I need to ease into the day's work, so I do more preparatory work, like going over the day's schedule, straightening up the office, e-mails. Once I'm warmed up, I crack open the script or writing file and get to work for a few hours. I break for lunch, meditation, make calls, work out, do some errands – and start my second writing period. Then it's home for family time, dinner, and bedtime stories. But not my bedtime. Because at night, my energy cycle is perfect for opening mail, paying bills, filing, during simple research – tasks that don't take a lot of energy.

The point of this example is that if I opened my mail and paid my bills in the late morning, I would waste my most productive energy cycle (not to mention become depressed) which I couldn't make-up very easily at night during my bill paying, mail-opening time. Make sense? It may take some time to find your perfect energy-schedule, but it's worth the experimentation. I'm still making adjustments.

5. GIVE EVERY PROJECT 100%

Treat every project like it's the job of your dreams – and you'll soon attract more and more of your dream jobs. Why? Because you don't get what you want in life, you get what you are. Gandhi said we must become the change we want to see in the world. Likewise, we must become the kind of person who would get the kind of jobs we want in the world. This is another one of those universal principles I keep slipping in here. If it gives you a headache to try and make sense of it, don't. Just give it a shot and see what happens.

6. KEEP LEARNING

To have what others don't, you must do what others won't. The average person – and for that matter, the average screenwriter – has a tendency to take the path of least resistance. So you must take the road less traveled. Stay open at the top. Maintain a Beginner's Mind. Besides continued study in related and complimentary fields – read and investigate areas outside of your field – and outside of show business. Some of the most innovative ideas have come from people adapting concepts they discovered in completely unrelated fields.

7. ACT AND DRESS LIKE A PRO

This is another relative rule. A stockbroker acts and dresses quite differently than a tennis pro. In the entertainment industry, an executive acts and dresses differently than an actor. Even more specific, different clients will have different expectations. In general, business casual seems to work best.

You also want to have an updated resume and work samples (scripts, pitches, synopses, etc.) readily available. Do your homework, show up to appointments with all the right gear to get the job done, and treat each prospective client (producer, director, executive) with the utmost respect and value.

8. HONOR YOUR WORK HOURS

During work hours, especially in a home office, you'll have plenty of opportunities for distraction from well-meaning friends and family members. In the most diplomatic tone you can muster, kindly inform them that you're at work not at home. Your writing is a real business, not a hobby. (Isn't it?) You'll talk to them after hours, or on your break.

9. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Feed your mind and body with high quality nourishment -- and exercise. I know this is obvious to most people -- yet most people still don't do it. Writing is hard work that requires real endurance. If you want to be a high-performance person, you need to run on high-octane fuel.

10. KNOW THYSELF

The most successful people, in this or any field, know who they are so they can be true to that. They also know their strengths -- so they can play to them -- and their weaknesses -- so they can compensate for them.

These principles might not seem like great revelations. The fact is, most fundamental principles are quite simple. The key is in practicing them. Over and over. Day after day. Until they become as natural as breathing.

While I can't guarantee where you'll go with your career, if you do just this much - you will go further than most in whatever you endeavor to achieve!

Good luck – and Keep Writing!

Derek Rydall has sold, optioned, or been hired on assignment for over 20 film and TV projects. As a story consultant/script doctor, Derek has helped writers, producers, actors, and directors turn books into screenplays, secure millions in financing, make six-figure script deals, get hired to exec produce, direct, star in their movies, obtain major distribution, and win awards. He is the founder ScriptwriterCentral.com. Email him at derek@scriptwritercentral.com for free e-courses.