

# Gifts to self

**Ideas for what to give  
the most important writer  
on your list: you.**

**BY ANICA MROSE RISSI**



Love it or loathe it, the season of giving is upon us. However you feel about white elephant exchanges or using “gift” as a verb, now is the perfect time to present yourself – and your writing – with a few generous gifts to bring more sparkle and joy to your creative process throughout the year to come.

I made you a list and checked it twice. Wrapping paper optional.

### **THE GIFT OF CALLING YOURSELF A WRITER**

Here’s one gift where it’s truly the thought that counts.

Do you write? Then you’re a writer, and it’s time to embrace that part of yourself by naming it – in your head and out loud. Don’t have a book deal or a long list of publishing credits yet? So what? Is one only a knitter if one’s scarves are for sale at Target? Instead of being bashful or apologetic about your aspirations and ambitions, own your creative identity. Honor the time and talent you devote to your craft and acknowledge that it matters.

Thinking of yourself as a writer is a gift – and a promise – to your writing. Half the writing game is mental, and the first person who needs to consider your work legitimate is *you*.

### **THE GIFT OF TIME TO WRITE**

Whether it’s the first 15 minutes of every lunch break, 20 minutes twice a week before the kids wake up, or full evenings, days, or weekends you pledge to set aside for the task, give yourself regular, dedicated time to write.

This probably means ignoring other obligations or activities. It might mean asking people in your life for help. It definitely means protecting your time from intrusions, temptations, and distractions. So this is a gift you’ll need a plan for enacting. It’s also one of the most important gifts you can give yourself and your work.

Make the arrangements. Commit to them. And take full advantage of your own generosity by using the time to create.

### **THE GIFT OF SPECIFIC, ATTAINABLE GOALS (and a plan for accomplishing them)**

Go ahead, dream big! Then break that dream into smaller, more concrete, fully achievable steps – the more detailed (and within your control), the better. Don’t just reach for the stars. Choose a specific star and make yourself a map for how to get there – one that covers every inch along the way. When you hit detours and roadblocks, remap your way through or around them.

You’ve got this. You’ll get there. Step by step, show yourself how.

### **THE GIFT OF LETTING GO**

One hard, immovable fact of publishing is: There’s very little a writer can control beyond what’s on the page. You can submit your best work for representation and publication, but you can’t control how agents, editors, reviewers, or readers respond to it. You can make smart requests of your publisher’s marketing team and amplify their efforts with your own posts and appearances, but the average (and way above-average!) author can’t move the sales needle significantly. You can write awards-worthy stories but still make zero lists and receive little acclaim. All this – and so much else that deeply, directly impacts you as a writer – is simply out of your control. You can spend your time and energy fighting it with all your strength. Or you can give yourself permission to let those things go and just write.

## THE GIFT OF BOREDOM

Close your laptop. Put down the phone. Ignore your friends, family, and to-do list. Don't read, write, or hit play.

Give yourself a giant box of unstructured time and open it often. Create conditions in which your mind can wander. Don't get antsy – follow where it takes you. Get lost, meander, and enjoy.

## THE GIFT OF COMMUNITY

Writing may be a solitary act, but you don't have to go it alone. Build and invest in friendships with other writers – those you meet IRL (at coffee shops, classes, conferences, book clubs, local literary events, or by putting up a sign at your favorite bookstore or library) or online. Other writers aren't your competition – they're your colleagues and, in many cases, your *people*. Sure, writer friends sometimes provide good critiques or connections, but the even bigger gift is a friendship that feeds you creatively. The buddy system is fun – and it can save you from

drowning. Every writer needs a friend who *gets* it.

Show up for other writers. Be generous, genuine, and open. Support one another through the highs and lows of this writing life because we're all in it together.

## THE GIFT OF SAYING NO

Only you can prioritize your writing and headspace. If you don't protect it, no one else will. So give yourself three precious, powerful *nos* to spend, and use them to buy your own *yes*.

## THE GIFT OF SAYING YES

What would happen if you devoted yourself to writing that amazing, ambitious project you have been afraid to try? 🙌

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Anica Mrose Rissi is the award-winning author of more than a dozen books for kids and teens, including *Hide and Don't Seek: And Other Very Scary Stories*. Find her online at [anicarissi.com](http://anicarissi.com) and follow @anicarissi on Instagram and Twitter.

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