

Tip #33

Making Time for Art

This one's a bit of a change of pace, but we all have problems finding time to do what we need to. Life's busy and complex, and we're pulled in a dozen different directions. (Ironically, when I added it to the schedule back when I started writing these tips, time wasn't such an issue for me! It is now, so I'm glad I had this in the hopper.)

Here are a few ideas that have worked for me and others. (This appeared in another form in my column in *Watercolor Magic*, in 2003.).



- Make an appointment with yourself, and keep it, just like any other important event. Treat it like the essential it is, and you're more likely to make it happen.
- Be realistic in setting this time and place - go for what's possible, not what would be ideal, and then it will be. Set aside an hour, or fifteen minutes, and then DO it.
- If you must reschedule, then make sure you write down the new time, too. Try hard not to let anything come between you and this important appointment, because if you put it off again you may plant the seed in your subconscious that it really isn't all that essential.
- Don't beat yourself up, or get discouraged, angry, or depressed if things don't work out, though - promise yourself they will, then make it happen at the first opportunity.
- Prioritize. Write it down to make it concrete-use headings like "Must do, Should do, Want to do, Need to do, Am expected to do," or whatever fits your life. Make sure you put your art under the must do column - and don't be surprised if it also shows up on should do, want to do and need to do, too! Take a hard look at some of the other things and see if they really could be moved to a lower category or knocked off altogether in order to find more time for what's important.
- Take a look at how you work, as well as what has to get done. Is there a quicker way to do some of the less essential, non-art jobs? Can you save time for your art here, cut a non-essential corner there? Call out for pizza, or use a mix? Order online instead of going shopping? Does it REALLY matter if you can eat off your kitchen floor? (i.e., is anyone actually going to do that?)
- Go to bed planning what you'll do during your painting time the next day. It's not necessary to pin it down, just think about the fact that you will be painting, and kick around ideas. Before you get up in the morning, spend a few moments thinking about the art you'll make today. This will give your subconscious a message of your firm intent.
- Try painting early in the morning, before jumping into your workday. If you have to, set the clock an hour earlier. Even a half hour will give you time to sketch, plan, or get in a little quality painting time, if you're organized to do so.
- If you're a night person, reserve the time after the family goes to bed as your own. Don't let chores drag you away - this is more important than that load of clothes that "ought to get done," or the cookies you planned to bake. (Stop by the bakery, if you've promised to bring the goodies!)
- Discover the magic word "no." I had a tough time with that, until a counselor drummed it through my head that it really was ok. He told me I might need to repeat it till it sounded like a broken record, but it was ok to do that, too. Sonofagun...



- We all have bits and pieces of time at our disposal, but sometimes we think they're not worth utilizing. That's where we're wrong! Sketch while you wait in the doctor's office, for lunch to be served, while your car is being serviced. I once was trapped in Salt Lake City Airport for what was originally to be a short layover-instead, it turned into 6 hours. I broke out my small traveling watercolor set and painted the gorgeous mountains that lay outside those big windows...
- Try to keep your materials organized enough that you can pick them up any time, any place. Even a plastic storage tub with everything you need for a specific medium or project is a lifesaver. A toolbox with layers and compartments is nice, too-look in your discount store's tool section. A sketchbook with a pencil stuck in its pages is as organized as you really need to be - just be sure you know where it is when you need it. Time lost searching for what you need to make art is time lost to the making of it.

Of course there are many more ideas - but with this kick-start, you'll come up with your own!