

Excuses

Wisdom and Inspiration · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

Writers make excuses. All the time. Nobody is interested. I find them boring and I hate reading them. Just as you are not interested in the excuses of your relatives, loved ones or colleagues when they disappoint you. You are only ever letting down yourself.

At the end of their courses I trust that my students say something like: "Simon was a tough tutor. He never let me get away with anything. He pointed out my tiniest mistakes. He was relentless about spelling and grammar. He constantly made me aware of how to keep on improving my writing. Simon hated excuses and he never stopped reminding me how to be as professional as possible. He was tough and critical, but he was positive, ready to praise, ready to help. I have learned valuable knowledge and attitudes from Simon Townsend."

This still doesn't stop many students from telling me that they're late because they've been busy. We're all busy. My heartfelt advice is to NOT offer an excuse (or a "reason"). Instead, offer me your plan about how you won't be late again. And keep in mind the best rule I give you:

Keep your promises to yourself

But that doesn't mean "fit it in when you feel like it". It means scheduling and setting your own strict deadlines. Then you must stick to any deadline you set yourself. It's bad enough to break a promise to another person. It's one of life's big disasters when you break a promise to yourself.

Reprinted from The Wonderful World of Journalism. Written in the spirit of Simon Townsend's journalism craft advice. Visit simontownsendjournalist.com for the full archive.