

## Writing from Home: It Can Be Great and Not-So-Great for Mothers

by: Sarah Smiley I went to school to be a teacher. In fact, I have a B.S. in Education, not journalism. Due to the hours and holidays, teaching is traditionally thought to be the best work for a mother who wants to keep one foot in the mommy-door and one foot in the career-door. This thought, paired with my love for children and learning, led me to life inside the schoolhouse doors. Soon though, writing, not teaching, became my real "full time job," and it's been years since I set foot behind a teacher's podium. There are times I miss teaching and regret I haven't used my diploma more, but who am I kidding? -- freelance writing has to be the best situation for a stay-at-home mother: I get paid, I do something I love, and I don't leave the kids. What's more? I can stay in my pajamas all morning! Sometimes people ask if the lack of structure and absence of a physical "office" bother me and make it hard to concentrate. Sure, I get sidetracked watching a great episode of Rolie Polie Olie with my son every now and then, and I take long, leisurely breaks to chat on the phone or go to lunch, but this isn't because I "work at home," it's because I'm an artist. I only write when inspired and when it "feels right." Even if I sat behind a desk all day, I'd still piddle around and get distracted -- it's my nature to jump from project-to-project, then zero-in on a particular piece when the mood strikes me. This is the artist in me. Just as a painter cannot be told, "Paint, now!" a writer cannot sit in front of a blank screen and expect great things to flow. My best pieces, in fact, are written while I do such things as stand in line at the grocery store and wait at a red light, or during a commercial break from Oprah. As I'm sure any artist can relate, I usually get a "feeling" when I have a great story brewing in my mind. This is, I think, the blessing and curse of creativity, because sometimes that "feeling" comes in the middle of a dinner party or at two o'clock in the morning and I have to race to find paper and jot my thoughts down. My husband has grown accustomed to me running in the door, heading straight to the computer and yelling as I go, "Can't talk....got a story on my mind....need to get it on paper!" So, while I love this profession for its adaptability with the children and being a mother, sometimes the unpredictable nature of my creativity poses a few problems. For instance, if inspiration causes me to stay up until 3 a.m. writing a great column, I'm little use to my high-energy children a few hours later when they get up at the crack-of-dawn. Yes, I have the luxury of lounging in my pajamas and not going to an "office," but I struggle with the spontaneous nature of this business and the chaotic schedule it sometimes poses for my children and me. I guess though, even if things were different and my life was more structured, I'd still be a fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants kind of girl...that's just the life of an artist.

### About the Author

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