

WRITING TIPS (as of 5.26.2020)

Thanks to [Kelly P. Riggs](#) for sharing these!

#1 **JUST DO SOMETHING**

This is the first and most important thing you'll ever learn about writing. Writing is a career option that you'll find can be accomplished anywhere you happen to be. Thus, you're ultimately your own boss meaning that you work when you want to. Also know that because of that liberty you can put off starting just as easily as not. So it's important to "just do something", today and every day that you set aside to write. My suggestion is to write something as soon as you finish reading this tip. It doesn't matter what you write just write something, get in the habit right now so you too will one day be able to write your own check.

#2 **GET IT OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM**

Life often requires us to deal with particular issues before we can proceed to others. Writing is very similar in nature. I have a book to finish this month and I have set a strict schedule that if followed will help me reach that goal. But, this morning I woke up with a writing tip on my mind. Providing writing tips is something I pledged to do and is now an irrevocable responsibility. My problem is that this writing tip is on the forefront of my mind and mingles with the material for my new book. This is not a problem as long as I take a moment to re-organize my day, by a few minutes. It's time to get this writing tip out of my system so I can get back on my schedule- which had time for things just like this figured into it. I'm writing this tip early because it's fresh on my mind right now. Doing it now is how I clear my thoughts to make room for the task that was scheduled for this morning. So, always take the time to get back on track, sometimes you have to take the time to GET IT OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM.

#3 **DON'T WRITE WHERE YOU EAT,**

don't mix business with pleasure, and I'm sure there are hundreds more variations of this principle. In its most basic form the idea is to create a separation between work life and home life. Even in the most simple environments you should define some sort of difference between the two, to kick start your mind's creative flow. I currently live in a concrete box that is eight feet wide and ten feet long, and every morning I get dressed, I drink my coffee, and I brush my teeth; before I sit at my desk to write. That's correct, I get myself ready just like I'm going to work before taking a seat only four feet from where I sleep. I sit at my desk only to write, and I take my seat at seven o'clock sharp, every morning. So take a moment to define a difference, it will help you get your mind started.

#4 **KNOW WHAT YOU ARE KNOWN FOR**

I don't care what you do in life, you will in one way or another be branded. Your brand is what you are known for and more importantly how you make people feel. It's important to identify your brand and to keep it positive and consistent. You, just like me, will become known for something. But with some guidance, you unlike me, will recognize this fact and use it to your benefit early in your writing career. In simple terms your brand is the emotional effect that you have on the hearts of others-it's what you are known for. So, identify your brand and keep it positive.

#5 **BE INVESTED IN WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT-**

YOU. Writing often becomes an individual's work of passion. And as with any passion, it becomes a love only when it is shared. Unfortunately, when new writers start out, they rarely have huge promotion packages or unlimited budgets. They ordinarily must start from "Scratch." Scratch, can be a very small amount and it still works. My favorite practice, even as a prisoner, is to add a facebook page for an individual book-don't forget your brand as you put it together. Once the page is online I buy a promotion package through facebook for as little as \$100. So if you're just starting out, stop yourself from spending that first check, no matter how much it is, and invest a little of it in yourself with some promotion.

#6 **DO UNTO OTHERS...**

NO! Do for others BETTER than you would do for yourself. One thing that I've learned over the years is that professional writers depend on how others feel about them. Bottom line is, if writers are stingy with their support and kindness then they can expect nothing different from those around them. As a writer you should always strive to have a positive impact on others. It's never, too, late to adopt a win-win philosophy. This is simple, if you smile on others they are more likely to smile on you. If you want to galvanize this principle into your character, may I suggest that you take a shot at writing about something that helps others, at least once. And do be personal about it.

#7 **KEEP YOUR GOALS IN CLEAR VIEW**

Don't let anyone talk you out of loving the life of a writer. It may be tough in the beginning-let's face it, you, like me, are not destined for greatness just because you picked up a pen. But, just like any other art writing is a skill that is acquired by experience and study. And you are already an artist if you practice writing as an imaginative art.

So love like you have never been hurt. Let us practice as though voices of the negative are silent. Even your worst and earliest writing may one day serve as an example to those who will struggle to express their passions in the future.

8 **MANAGE YOUR DISTRACTIONS**

We've all heard about how we should manage our time, our habits, and our money. But how about our distractions? Distractions are probably one of the top ten killers of a writer's productivity. Therefore, they must be managed.

Take care of unexpected problems and responsibilities before you sit down to write. Turn the phone off when possible and set some soft instrumental music to play in the background. Don't get me wrong, things happen. They happen to me too. But I put my problems behind me as quickly as I possibly can. That way, I can get my mind back on my writing.

#9 **GOOD WRITERS KEEP A JOURNAL**

It doesn't matter how good you think your memory is, everyone forgets something sooner or later. That goes for all classes of people of all ages, especially writers. That's why I keep a journal. A journal is most often kept as a recording of the day's events. A writer's journal, however, should be a record of a writer's thoughts.

Anybody in the world can have a great idea, and it happens more often than they think-and I do mean anyone. During a fifteen minute phone call my ten-year-old son, Tommy, he gave me a great idea for a new line of children's books. It would be a shame for me to forget such a great idea, not to mention a disservice to my son's future. As you can imagine I keep a journal.

A writer's journal should be within arms reach first thing in the morning. The idea for one of my upcoming fiction novels, De-Ja Vu, came to me in my sleep. That's why my journal is the first thing I touch every morning and it stays with me until the day's writing is finished. If you want to be your best, keep a journal.

#10 **BE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE**

Writers have more influence on the world around them than any other group of people. It doesn't matter what's said, any suggestion that's to be followed will sooner or later be written. This fact can be realized in every area of life, from religions that are thousands of years old, to acts of Congress, and even trends that are reported in the media. Therefore, writers above all other people have a responsibility to the words they share.

The words you share are your influence on the world around you. I strongly advise that writers keep their words direct and positive. A good influence will draw people to a positive writer. If you want to be a popular writer be a good influence and share your sunny disposition.

#11 **OUTLINE! OUTLINE! OUTLINE!**

Yeah that's right, your junior high school English teacher was right. I learned long ago that my mind tends to wander. Because of that one inescapable fact I have learned that I must write down directions, instructions, and simple messages. So, how then could I possibly keep my thoughts together long enough to write a book? The trick is I outline. I outline not only my book ideas, but long chapters as well.

When I write anything of significant length I outline it first. This goes for books, long letters, motions, petitions, and even some chapters. You want to be your best, learn to outline. You'll be amazed how fast the end of your great idea will sneak up on you.

#12 **STAY THE COURSE**

Let's face it, we all write for a reason. Some write to make a living, some write to advocate for others, and some write to change the world. Regardless of which category you fit in, things are not always going to be easy. That's why it's important to Stay The Course. Take the good with the bad and stick with it. My personal motto is, "Just make it happen." I suggest that you do the same if you want to be a successful writer.

#13 **STAYING PRODUCTIVE**

Writing is much more than a job, it's a passion. But just as with any other passion, the desire to write can easily fade. When that happens, your productivity can start to suffer. This problem is easily overcome by writing what you like-what you're excited about-first.

You would be amazed at how many times I have written chapters out of order, simply because I was more excited about one chapter than I was another. A good example of this is the book I just finished, and sure enough I wrote chapters three through seven before I wrote chapters one and two. By the time I got around to writing chapters one and two (the last chapters I wrote) I was excited about finishing the book. As long as you continue to love what you write, you will never be forced to work a day in your life.

If you want to stay productive write the parts you're excited about first. But of course, never forget to follow your outline.

#14 A GOOD SCHEDULE

It's easy to find several movies, books, and stories about eccentric writers, and I'm sure there are hundreds of eccentric writers out there. "Eccentric" is defined as deviating from a usual or accepted pattern, and now that I think about it, all the writers I know are eccentric in one way or another.

Although writers tend to strike a different path, I highly recommend that all writers maintain a good schedule. The popularity of writers can easily be effected by their willingness to keep a good schedule. When writers keep their appointments they build confidence in everyone who is a witness. A failure to keep appointments can sow distrust in those who admire any writer.

If you can't keep a particular appointment let everyone know in advance. This goes for blog posts, emails, and returning phone calls, too. When people see they can depend on what you say, they are more inclined to follow your work. If you want to be a successful writer, keep a good schedule.

#15 KEEP A GOOD BACKLIST

This is an important issue even for writers who are just starting out. First, let me explain what a "backlist" is. A backlist is just what it sounds like, another 'list'. This list however, is different, it's a collection of what may one day be great ideas that are worth a lot of income, but for now are on the 'back' burner.

In years to come, when most writers are just semi famous, they will be urged to write new material. Rather than spend hours and hours trying to come up with a new idea, well prepared writers will simply pull an idea out of their backlist and start the polishing process. A backlist is similar to keeping a journal, some writers keep a journal only as a backlist.

I probably have twenty titles in my backlist, and I suggest that you start your backlist today.

#16 FOREVER BE A STUDENT

If I've never suggested it before, please allow me to suggest it now--continue to learn about the craft of writing. What's most important to realize is that the world changes a little bit with every rising sun. Whether it be what the world wants to read or how writers express themselves from day to day, something changes just a little bit every day.

It's important for a writer to keep up with the changing of the times. To do that writers must continually advance their understanding of the world around them. It makes no difference whether a writer chooses to take a course at a local community college, hire a private tutor, or simply read the book of a new author; they should do something to expand their mind on a regular basis.

I recently read a book of quotes that listed the words of people from Socrates all the way to Bill Clinton. The one quote that got my attention the most went something like this: If at 50, you view the world the same as you did when you were 20, you have wasted 30 years of your life.

Learn something everyday, if you want to succeed as a writer.

#17 WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As many of you know, I'm engaged in writing several fiction novels that complete the collection that relates to, my first published fiction novel, 'Under Seal'. And one thing that I have found to be very important, when writing a book series, is to keep a reader's attention focused from one book to the next.

I've learned, from previous book lines, that reducing the potential for reader confusion is critical. And nothing can cause more confusion than being unable to recognize specific characters from one chapter to the next. My personal practice is to never use similar or identical names for two different characters. Likewise, I don't use two different names for the same character without a clear introduction of both names.

When introducing a character I give their proper legal name in the beginning. Then I make a big deal, that the reader can remember, out of the character's nick name if they have one. I like to believe that I make a good example of this when I introduced 'James Rhodes', the main character, as 'Rhodi' in 'Under Seal'.

For those of you who have trouble thinking up names, like I do, take the initiative to get a book of names. You'll even find some books that give definitions for, and factoids about, the names a writer can chose from. I use a book of names to make my life a little easier.

- KELLY PATRICK RIGGS -