

Don't Attempt To Write Without Them!

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**Don't Attempt To Write Without Them!**

**By Linda Elizabeth Alexander**

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You're ready to do it. You've accepted an assignment from your boss, agreed to put together a sales presentation, or were asked to write a report about last week's meeting results. Where do you begin? Before you venture off into the land of writing for your job, be prepared with the items on this checklist.

1. Adjust your attitude. Writing doesn't have to be like drawing blood. In fact, many times in business writing, much of the work is already done for you. Your job may be as simple as rewording or organizing information that you already have.
2. Quiet. No matter how much you like your music or AM radio talk show it is best to work in a quiet spot. Even if you work in a noisy place like a newsroom or a cube farm, reduce the amount of noise around you so you can concentrate better. Wear earplugs if it helps you!
3. Your thinking cap! Colored markers, pencils, or a large easel pad may help you with brainstorming. Or, you may find it easier to work with a team first to generate ideas and then have one person write the first draft. Whatever works for you, make sure your brain is in creative mode, not editing/criticism mode. Creativity comes first; editing and refining later.
4. Eliminate distractions.

Turn off the phone, close your office door, and don't check your email every 10 seconds. Have your assistant tell everyone you're in a meeting and you can't see him or her unless they're dying.

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For at least 1 hour, work with no interruptions.

5. Computer, pen, scratchpad, or other tools you like.

You may prefer writing longhand; it can help you connect with your thoughts and emotions. Or, you may be quicker at typing directly on the computer. Either way, don't expect a perfect draft the first time. You will be scribbling a lot (or cutting and pasting) at first.

6. Contact names and phone numbers, etc.

Be sure you have handy a list of people you might need to talk with to verify information. For example, if you are writing an article for your company newsletter, you may need quotes from the CEO.

7. Dictionary and Thesaurus. The ones that come with the word processor are not sufficient. Get yourself some good old fashioned books, or a dictionary hesaurus on CD.

8. Company style guide. Some companies are very strict about their internal or external communications. They may have rules about style (different accepted spellings, for example) so that everybody who reads your company's literature or correspondence receives a consistent message about your company. You may lose credibility with your readers if everything sounds like it came from XYZ Corporation, except the letter you are writing.

9. The right atmosphere. If your office doesn't cut it, find a better place. The library may work. A conference room might provide more space for you to pace as you're dictating your masterpiece. If you're writing about your company's manufacturing plant, it might help you to actually be there while you're writing.

10. Writing is rewriting. Remember that nobody, even Shakespeare, gets it on the first try. Your first draft is exactly that – a rough copy, a sketch. Think of it as the equivalent of a doodle when artists paint. They don't start with the canvas – and neither should you. Unlike many other jobs, in writing, it's okay to make mistakes as you go along. Your final draft will be vastly different from the few sentence fragments you begin with.

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Using the checklist items will set you up for a successful writing session. Have on hand as many of these items as you can each and every time you sit down to write something — whether it's a letter to your customers or an annual report. By keeping all the tools you need in one place, your writing session will go smoother and will be easier on your stress level than without them.

Linda Elizabeth Alexander is a business writer and marketing consultant based in Longmont, Colorado, USA. Improve your writing skills at work! Subscribe to her FREE ezine. Write to the Point at [lalexander@write2thepointcom.com](mailto:lalexander@write2thepointcom.com) or visit <http://www.write2thepointcom.com/articles.html>.

### **The Three Decisions Writers Must Make Before They Start A Book Project**

**By Marvin D. Cloud**

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First, the bad news: there is no magic formula, potion or pill that will turn the story idea in your head into a manuscript. Words will not automatically appear on paper. All of the necessary elements for a "purpose-driven" book will not fall from the sky and converge in your lap as a completed literary work. It is entirely up to you.

The burden is on your shoulders. You are the one who must do the research, interview persons, recall conversations, develop an outline, create a draft, make your characters come to life, and keep readers interested enough to continuously turn to the next page. The good news is, you can do it.

Remember, whether you believe something is possible or not, you're right. However, I invite you to follow this compelling model for effectively writing a personal bestseller: M.I.N.E. (Motivation + Inspiration + Narration + Eternization). The right reasons (motivation) move you (inspiration) to capture words on paper (narration) for future generations (eternization).

But before you can get the full impact of M.I.N.E., there are three commitments that you must make to yourself before you can make any progress in writing a book:

#### 1. Make a decision to write.

Since you have already thought about writing a book, there is really nothing else for you to think about. Stop thinking and start doing. Before you leave this page and before you finish this paragraph, make a decision to write. It can change your entire life. If you don't take new action, you haven't made a decision.

#### 2. Make a committed decision to write.

How to do it, and if you can do it, are not to be considered now. Would you attempt to write if you knew for certain you couldn't fail? Since failure is often defined as "not trying," then trying equals success. I've discovered that carrying out a commitment is often easier than making one. You've made a real

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decision about a goal if, and only if, you find yourself doing something about it.

3. Make a committed decision to write with which you can be flexible.

Once you've decided to write your book, don't get stuck on the means to achieve it. You are going after the finished product. For example, most people think you can just write a book straight through. However, there may be greater value in planning out your book before you write your first word. Circumstances change and you must be able to change with them.

Most new writers and seasoned ones as well, don't write as much as they can on a daily basis. Even writing part-time, two pages per day is a good start, and more can easily be done if the effort is put forth. Spend the next 90 days writing at least one page per day. This will get you out of your comfort zone, out of the limits you have placed on yourself and out of what you have convinced your brain that you can and cannot do. As you become more and more accustomed to writing and working towards

your goal, you will probably discover that you didn't set a high enough quota of pages.

Marvin D. Cloud is the founder of mybestseller.com. His goal is to produce, market and sell personal bestsellers for "ordinary people with extraordinary stories." He is the author of the "Get Off The Pot" Writer's Workbook, Get Off The Pot ezine and the recently released book, "Get Off The Pot: How to Stop Procrastinating and Write Your Personal Bestseller in 90 Days."



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