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HOW TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER

By Craig Lock

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"If a man has talent and cannot use it, he has failed. If he has a talent and uses only half of it, he has partly failed. If he has a talent and learns somehow to use the whole of it, he has gloriously succeeded and has a satisfaction and a triumph few men ever know."

— Thomas Wolfe

By now you have decided what kind of writer you'd like to be:

You either want to write for pleasure or for profit.

To write articles or just to write for your own enjoyment?

Or perhaps just start writing and see what develops.

To perhaps even one day write a book—about your life or about the life of someone you know.

To one day write the novel you always dreamed of...and I believe everyone has some tale to tell. We can all reach out and help others by sharing a little of our little (don't repeat 'little' in such close proximity— "yes sir, boss"!) world. Somebody else said: "No one but a blockhead would write not to be published."... but I don't agree with that one.

I believe writing is for pleasure or profit, but it can be both. That's the ideal to aim (and wish/hope) for. Could I end that sentence with a "preppie" (preposition)?

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER

That was my ideal when I started out in my quest to do something worthwhile with my life after being dropped out of the sky here in "Sleepy Hollow". I try to have a bit of FUN with my writing, because life (together with all the appendages, like mortgages, bills (but not my business associate, Bill Rosoman), wives, "hubbies", etc) can be ever so serious.

We spoke about making a writer out of you.

Decide where and when to write.

Which room is most comfortable and gives you peace and quiet?

When are you most creative?

Are you a "morning" or "evening" person, when your concentration is at it's highest level? My body rhythms (correct spelling – for a change!) work best in the early morning, so I'm in bed with my teddy bear and hot "choccie" and pussy cat by 9pm. How utterly boring!

When are you most likely to be undisturbed?
I have the strangest type of people (plenty of "weirdos") dropping in to visit "recluse" me. Must be the lot of an "artist"!

Treat your writing seriously and bar visitors – it is your work or leisure time, yet people don't seem to understand that. "When are you going to get a proper job", ask the locals continuously (should it be 'continually'?), as they can't seem to understand us "strange" writers. Nor even my good Aussie friend, Kaye who is visiting at the moment!

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GETTING STARTED

What to write about?

This is the writer's principal dilemma.

Write what the market wants, but draw on your world, your unique experiences in life.

Ask yourself this:

How can I best inform, entertain, help or perhaps even inspire other people?

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER

Where to get ideas?

The human mind has the most incredible power and your imagination is your greatest asset.

So use the great powers of your IMAGINATION to the fullest by allowing your creative juices to flow.

Then once you have the idea, RESEARCH well, so you are factually correct.

Accuracy in writing is paramount for credibility– you have to be seen to be an authority on your subject..

If you are writing purely for money (nothing wrong with that!), write what will sell. I only write from the heart, either with serious messages (in my novels) or "zany" and hopefully uplifting material for the human spirit in my non-fiction "work".

Always remember:

There are too many subjects to write about – not too few!

Remember to collect interesting items for later use.

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR WRITING STYLE

We all have a unique style of writing, in addition to our unique experiences in life... because each one of us is unique, thank God. So just be grateful for who you are , your unique abilities and gifts and count your blessings. Enough on this subject – this is not a new spiritual book!

Style is our natural way of writing: it can be brief, long-winded, chatty, wacky, breezy, light, heavy and so on – like the way we talk. I try and write like I speak: very much to the point, but with the odd "zany" bit thrown in to startle or get a person thinking (or perhaps just wondering about me and where I'm coming from – Mars!).

My advice...

Build on your own natural style of writing... and the best way to do that is to get into the writing habit. Then just be you. Incidentally, a word of seriousness (for a change)... Although this road I have chosen is very rocky and financially uncertain,

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER

doing this type of work gives me way more fulfilment in my life than ever before, as well as feeling this is the "real me". And that's most important.

(Can I start a sentence with an "And". See the next "gripping" lesson to find out).

Write something daily; because practice makes perfect.

Be open to growth, to try new styles or new directions in your writing. I find after I've done a serious book (like a novel on South Africa), I try to write to inform and entertain in a light breezy style. Probably just both sides of me coming out.

You could perhaps try adding touches of humour, your natural humour, of course!

This comes with confidence and confidence comes with more writing. My confidence has increased greatly after my tentative first steps down this track.

I believe the essence of good writing style lies in precision and accuracy.

Therefore omit unnecessary words. Try to think up some examples of everyday unnecessary words and let me know what they are in our homework. One example to get you started: "actually".

Lots more on style coming up in another lesson.

I hope this information may be helpful to you in your creative writing.

Craig Lock is an author of numerous books and the creator of the "original" online creative writing course. <http://www.nzenterprise.com/writer/creative.html>

What Publications Should Look for in a Technology Writer

By David Geer

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HOW TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER

What to look for in a technology writer.

A good technology writer has a good portfolio. The writer you want will have samples that parallel the content you're looking for. A good portfolio sample can be found at <http://www.GeerCom.com/samples.html>.

A good technology writer is a good investigator. A professional technology writer takes time to get to know you, your publication, and your goals. What do you really want to get out of this project? A great writer will ask because a disciplined professional needs to know.

A good technology writer is a team player. Professional writing requires top-notch communications skills on all levels, not just in the text of your articles and features. The writer you want should be able to carry on a dialogue with you and your team to discover your needs, and to make sure that they are met.

A good technology writer is prepared to work with you and your team until you're satisfied. Consultations, revisions and changes should be built into the fee. These are part of the process and should be foreseen by the writer.

Finally, a good technology writer instills confidence. After providing the necessary requirements and information, you should feel comfortable letting the writer drive where the story is concerned. You should be able to rely on their responsiveness to your queries. You should be assured that they will deliver all that you expect and more.

About the Author David Geer is chief technology writer, technical journalist and owner of Geer Communications, which helps print and electronic publications meet their content needs. E-mail him at David@GeerCom.com, call him at 440-964-9832, or check out the Geer Communications Website at www.GeerCom.com.



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