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Writing Tips For Novice Authors

By Patty Apostolides

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by: **Patty Apostolides**

If you are reading this article then you probably have asked yourself at some point in your life, "Do I have what it takes to become an author?"

I believe that successful authors, those who actually write and finish that novel, or book of poetry, or even that book of short stories, and see it all the way to publication, have certain characteristics.

Characteristics of Authors

1. They like to sit for hours in front of a computer screen (or with pen and paper), typing (writing) away.
2. They think about their book, even when they're not writing.
3. They are motivated to finish their book.
4. They are motivated to proofread, edit and revise their finished book until it is the best it can be.
5. They are motivated to publish their book.
6. Once they publish the first book, they are already working on the next one.

If you answered yes to anyone of the above, then you have a good chance of attaining your dreams of becoming an author. Don't listen to those people who say it's a competitive market out there. Don't listen to those people who say they've written five books and haven't had one published yet. And don't listen to those people who send you back your manuscripts! Listen to yourself. Listen to that inner voice, the one that is whispering now. But wait until you get started. Once your book is written and published, that inner voice will be roaring! And the whole world will hear about it.

Writing Tips For Novice Authors

I know, I know. I tend to be the optimist. But we have so many pessimists in the book business, we sure need some more optimists around!

For you, the novice writer who would like to start writing that first book, the best way to begin is to start writing. Yes, just sit down and do it. Stop the other activities, the television, the reading, the shopping, the chatting on the telephone, and find the time to devote at least one hour a day to writing.

What's one hour a day in the scheme of things? It comes and goes like this, poof! What do you have to show after an hour of television? A lazy yawn? If that same hour were spent on writing, then there would be a product in your hands, something that will be shared, hopefully, one day with others.

So, go ahead, shut the door to the rest of the world for one hour (or more) and make yourself comfortable in front of the computer screen (or pen and paper). Let's take the first step to becoming an author.

How To Begin

Foundation

Just like a construction company which builds a foundation to a home, you also need to prepare a foundation for your career in writing. Don't skip this step, it's important.

Your "foundation" will consist of basic writing skills. Remember those English courses you took in high school and college? If you don't remember anything from those courses, then it wouldn't be a bad idea if you found your old English textbooks, dusted them off a bit, and looked through their pages to refresh your memory.

If you haven't taken any courses in creative writing, you might consider signing up for one. Check with your local community college. They often offer weekend and evening classes, and sometimes even online classes. If you're on a budget, then visit the public library and sign out books relevant to writing.

In addition, it would be very useful to join a writing group (online or in your local area) that critiques your work and gives you the opportunity to critique also. The group provides wonderful support and an avenue to sharpen your skills as you gain experience in writing, as well as exposure to other people's writing. For example, Writing.com is a good example of an online resource that provides many opportunities to share your writing, and get your work rated and reviewed. If you want to join a critique or review group, it offers that also.

The second step to becoming an author, is to have the right tools.

Tools Needed

Besides a comfortable chair, plenty of lighting, and a quiet room, you will need a computer with a word processing program (e.g., Microsoft Word), a printer, and plenty of paper.

Writing Tips For Novice Authors

Why a computer? First of all, publishers typically will request a copy of your files sent to them on a floppy disk. More importantly, working with a word processing program will aid you in many ways towards becoming a published author. It will provide the opportunity to save your work as a Word file, without having to use up tons of paper (as with a typewriter). This greatly aids you in keeping your work organized. It also gives you the flexibility to edit and re-edit large sections of your work quickly by allowing you to utilize the copy and paste functions.

Other advantages of using a computer word processing program is that it provides spell check capabilities, and also helps you count the number of words per page. In addition, when you want to spice up your vocabulary (For example, if you like to use the word "walk" often, and are getting tired of that word), place your cursor on the word "walk", hit shift F7. It will give you a list of synonyms you can choose from – like stroll, amble, etc.).

The time saved by using a computer is very valuable. It gives you more time available to write! Of course, if you don't have the above materials, don't let that stop you from writing that book! Using a pen and paper is perfectly fine. Books were written with these two basic tools for centuries.

Let's assume you are using a computer and a Word processing software. First of all, before you begin

writing, form a subdirectory that you can add all your chapters to. Maybe you know the title of your book already. Fine, then form a subdirectory using the name of the title. After you finish writing that first chapter (oh joy!), just save it as Chapter 1 under the subdirectory. If you are writing a book of poetry, then you might want to save each poem as a separate file.

When I write my chapters for my novel, I format them in double space mode, with a Times New Roman 11 font. All the margins are at least one inch. This way it will be ready for manuscript submission.

Try not to add your page numbers until the very last revision. Page numbers constantly change when you're revising, so wait until the end.

Finally, another reason for having a computer is for Internet access. As a writer, you will have opportunities to submit your fiction online, such as

or even your articles online

for e-zines, such as

Any chance you can get to write online, do it. As long as

it doesn't take too much time away from your book. It's also a free way of promoting yourself before the book is even published.

So you need to balance your time in writing that book, honing your writing skills, submitting your work along the way for others to critique, and promoting yourself. Can you do it? Of course you can!

The third step to becoming an author is:

What to Write

If you are planning to write a novel, it would help to know what general category your book is going to be in. Will it be in the romance, mystery, or science fiction category? If you don't know, take some time and think about it. Read some books in those genres. Which books seem to attract you the most? It's highly likely that you'll be writing in the category that you like to read. My preference is romance because I read those types of books the most. Once you decide the category, then you are closer to writing that novel!

For poetry, you might start by writing a poem and submitting it to a poetry journal, or a poetry contest. Gain exposure for your poetry. Join a critique group so you can sharpen your poetry skills. A chapbook usually consists of about 25–35 poems. For a poetry book, you'll need at least 60 pages of poetry, if not more.

Types of Novelists

I have found over time, that there are two types of novelists. The first type is the writer who prefers drawing up a proposal or plan of what they will write about. The second type prefers to write whatever comes into their mind at that moment.

You decide which writer you will be.

Type 1 Novelist

They begin by describing the characters, their names, personalities, and sometimes their motives. Then they decide when and where the setting will take place. When will it take place? If it takes place before the 1900's, then it will be considered historical. Also, will the setting be in the country, in a city

(which city?), in a house (whose house), on a cruise ship? That needs to be defined also.

Once those decisions are made, they write brief sketches of each chapter. It could be a page or two long. Once all this is done, then the real writing begins. If this method works for you, then feel free to use it. It may take some time, but you will become more confident about what you'll write once you go through this initial process.

Type 2 Novelist

What if you're the type of person who doesn't want to spend all that time writing proposals and character sketches? What if you're like me, who prefers to just write whatever comes into your head? Then do it! Sit down and start writing. Write anything.

As the story develops, something wonderful begins brewing in your mind. Something called creativity. I've caught myself hours after I finished writing a chapter, and I'll be preparing dinner, or walking

somewhere, and a scene from my novel will begin to unfold. It's called creative problem solving. My mind is working to solve the problem that the writing presents it, even though I'm not actively writing. When I get those urges, I immediately stop what I'm doing and jot down my thoughts. It's helped me many times, particularly when everything clicks together.

How Long Will It Take?

It took me almost two years to write and find a publisher for my first novel, Lipsi's Daughter. For other people, it may take longer or shorter, depending on the amount of time they allow for writing and how many pages they are writing. I know of authors that took six, seven, up to twelve years to write their first book. I also know of a famous author who writes two novels a year!

So unless you begin writing that first page of your book, you'll never know how long it'll take you to write it. Go ahead, make that first step, and good luck!

Patty Apostolides is an author and poet. She has written several articles as well as published the novel "Lipsi's Daughter." More information can be found on her website:

Ebook Review: How to Write and Publish Your Own eBook in as little as 7 days

By Andy George

Jim Edwards and Joe Vitale who are both well known in the Internet online industry wrote this eBook. The 2004 version of this book is 206 pages long though it should be mentioned that less than 100 pages are concentrated on the theme of the eBook whereas the rest of the eBook involves interviews with various successful eBook authors (in the eyes of Edwards and Vitale) and bonus reports.

I believe that Edwards and Vitale were wrong to follow this approach since when one tries to overkill with respect to information, the result is opposite to the one intended since the reader may be confused even more and in my opinion the eBook would have been more effective if it was shorter and did not include the interviews with these authors whose approaches were different. Perhaps Vitale and Edwards should have sold the interviews by the eBook experts as a separate eBook.

The 7-day eBook was written in an unorthodox style in that it was written in a "chatty" style rather than in a formal manner. To be fair to the authors this did help in maintaining the interest of the reader.

The content of the eBook contained some very useful aspects such as: Distinguishing between a successful and failure formula for an eBook. Tips for selecting a topic for an eBook How to write the eBook in 7 days - though I think this target may be ambitious in practice the methodology mentioned by the authors is worth considering. Various tips on how to publish the eBook.

The price of the eBook is in my opinion reasonable value considering the money that can be saved by reading this eBook and the valuable links that can be obtained from the eBook. But I felt at times that the authors over elaborated and could have been more concise in their writing.

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Overall I believe that a purchase of the eBook for a price under \$30 is worth buying despite its limitations.

Andy George is a qualified chartered accountant who was born in Birmingham, England and who has had many years' experience in public practice, industry, and commerce and as a lecturer. Since 1991 he has been based in the island of Cyprus. Andy was a financial correspondent for eight years at the Cyprus Financial Mirror where he wrote articles on business and accounting related issues to a non-technical audience.

He is the author of eBooks: How to write and Publish Your Own With a Shoestring Budget

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