# THE ROAD TO WRITING

## **HELPFUL TIPS ON THE CRAFT OF WRITING**

## **BY JUDY HOWARD**

# Tools to start your story engine

# Simple TOOLS FOR THE ROAD TO WRITING

## **Pen or pencil**

## **Paper & notebook**

## **No eraser!**

## **Computer & lots of ink cartridges**

## **Microsoft office**

## **The internet**

# INTANGIBLE YET INVALUABLE TOOLS

## **Time and discipline**

##  To succeed a writer must keep a writing schedule.

##  In any business plan, in order to reach your goal, steadfast, regular, and hours driven by passion are the spine of a hard backed profession.

## Writing on a schedule leads to the next step in writing.

## **EDITING.**

# EDITING tools

## **READ ALOUD**

## Your ears need to hear what you have written.

##  By listening, you will hear “the flow” of what you have written.

##  Is the sentence too long? Does it make sense?

##  How many times did you use the passive verbs or “ly” words?

## **EDIT**

## You will always find something needing change after you read aloud.

##  Make the changes.

## **READ ALOUD**

##  Read aloud again and rewrite.

## **WRITING IS REWRITING**

## **.**

# FRIENDS

## **Ask your friends for honest criticism.**

## **Does it make sense?**

## **Does it “flow”?**

## **How’s the grammar?**

## **Can they “see” the character or the scene?**

## **How did the story affect them?**

## **With their critique, you will rewrite.**

# PATIENCE

## A thick skin is required.

## Once again, you will ask your friends read what you have rewritten.

## Being the good friends they are, they will critique again, and you will rewrite, again, and again, and again.

## .Beware!! You will have fallen in love with some words you have written but they just don’t fit, and you will have to let them go.

##  **Writing Is Rewriting**

# TOOLS FOR Writer’s block

##  **WRITING PROMPTS**

## There are many books, blogs and websites on writing prompts.

## Today I’m not going to…….

## I’ll never do that because….

## At the store, I ……

## Write about pencils, or soup, or bunnies

## .

##  **READ A GOOD BOOK**

## A good book or a movie will inspire you.

## In the process you will learn what makes a good story**.**

#  Ideas are everywhere

## **PAY ATTENTION – CARRY A NOTE PAD**

## How would you describe the people and places you encounter? Details.

## Everywhere you go, everyone you see, in the car, standing in line at the bank, or waiting in the doctor’s office…

## What makes this person or place different from the next?

# TAKE A BREAK

## **Sometimes you are just too close.**

##

## **Do anything to pull your mind away from your writing.**

## **Physical exercise is a healthy break.**

## **Take a walk.**

## **Read a good book or watch a movie.**

## **Clean house.**

# Our most brilliant ideas come in a flash.

## But the flash comes only after a lot of hard work.

## No one gets a grand idea when he is not relaxed, yet no one gets a lofty idea when he is relaxed all the time.

##

# WHEN DID YOU GET YOUR BEST IDEAS?

## **Did they happen:**

## **While you were in the shower?**

## **During a walk?**

## **On your way to work?**

## **Just before bed?**

## **What do all these situations have in common?**

## **You’re *not* in front of your computer staring at the blank page.**

# Maintaining your story engine

## **Keeping the pages turning**

# What makes a good story?

## **Story is NOT about what happens.**

##### A natural disaster, a crime, or a war.

## **Story is about people.**

##### The people who experience the tragedy.

#####  The victims of the criminals or the criminals.

#####  The people who need a miracle.

# Story is about what people do when something happens.

##### Do they rally together?

#####

##### Do they fall apart, grow bitter?

##### Do they deny what happened?

#  show, don’t tell

##  **SHOW, DON’T TELL**

#### He felt angry.

#### **Instead,** “–”His blood pulsed, he slammed the door.

#### **SHOW, DON’T TELL**

#### He saw the accident.

####  **Instead,** “His mouth dropped open, he ran towards the twisted pile of metal.”

#### **SHOW, DON’T TELL**

#### He thought about …

####  **Instead,** use dialogue to find out what your character is thinking.

# Use active verbs - Avoid passive verbs

####  Instead of, “She walked to the store.”

####  Say, “She trod, plodded, or skipped to the store.”

####  Instead of “She was a good employee.”

####  Say, “She arrived on time ,ate her lunch at her desk.”

### **AVOID ABSTRACT WORDS - USE THE SENSES**

##### **Instead of pretty**, ugly, love, hate…

##### **Show** these through actions, dress, habits…

##### Pretty is in the eyes of the beholder so be specific

##### **Instead of** the house smelled good.

##### **Say,** “the scent of pine tingled his nostrils as he entered.”

##### Describe the smell, the sound, the weather and how your character reacts to it.

# Building a character

## **All books are about people.**

## **A character is:**

#### What he says.

#### Who he says it to.

#### And how he says it.

# Plot and structure

## **Many times conflict is gradual.**

###### The story begins with a sense of unease. (Jaws)

###### Your main character sees her husband at lunch with her girlfriend.

## **As events happen, the sense of unease increases.**

###### Then she sees them sitting too close together in a cab.

# More about conflict

## **The protagonist must attempt to overcome the conflict.**

##### The protagonist ‘s jealousy drives her husband into her girlfriends arms.

## **Usually the first attempt makes the conflict worse.**

##### The protagonist has an affair too to make her husband jealous.

##### In the movie Jaws they kill a shark, but not Jaws, which gives a false sense of security.

# SECRETS OF PLOTTING A STORYLINE

## **The Plot Must Be Composed Of A Series Of Conflicts**

## **Types of conflicts**

## Inner, (Pretty Woman)

## Personal (It’s A Wonderful Life)

##  External (Jaws)

## **The Protagonist Must Fail Many Times.**

## **The Protagonist’s Story Is Only As Interesting As The Antagonist Makes It.**

## **The More Daunting The Enemy, The Better The Story.**

# The final destination

## **Publishing and marketing**

# Publishing and marketing

## **Using the right tools and story maintenance, you will arrive at your DESTINATION**

## **MEMOIR**

## **BOOK**

## **BLOGS**

## **MAGAZINE ARTICLE**

## **HOW TO BOOK**

## **POETRY**

# THE WORLD OF PUBLISHING

## **AGENTS**

## **1. An agent’s job is to find you a publisher.**

## **2 Agents specialize in certain genres.**

## **PUBLISHERS**

## **1. Publishers buy the rights to your book.**

## **2. THEY PAY YOU. YOU DO NOT PAY THEM!**

## **3.You are not guaranteed sales.**

## **QUERY LETTERS**

## **A synopsis and promotional letter to an agent or a publisher.**

# Self-Publishing

## **You publish, own, and market your book.**

## **You can publish at NO COST to you.**

## **You may hire services, such as cover designers, editors, etc.**

# Marketing Venues

## Blogging

## Facebook

## Twitter

## Book Signings

## Amazon

## Kindle

## Magazines, Newspapers

## Libraries

## Schools

## Public Speaking

# Great websites, CLUBS, & GROUPS

## **WEBSITES**

###  **Daily Writing Tips.Com**

###  **Writer’s Digest.Com**

###  **Createspace.Com**

###  **K.M. Weiland.Com**

###  **The Internet Writing Workshop.Org**

###

### **CLUBS**

###  **Romance Writers**

###  **Sisters In Crime**

###  **California Writers Group**

## **OTHERS**

##  **A Local Writing Group**

##  **The 10 Minute Novelists.Com**

# Join a local on-line writing critique group

## **Writing critique groups bring authors together to share their successes, weaknesses, and strengths. Most groups have authors at every level of accomplishment so you don’t need to feel intimidated.**

## **If you cannot find a writing critique group that suits your needs, start your own group. Writing groups become an intimate structure and each has its own personality. Find one that fits.**

# Running a writing critique group

# TIP #1. Constructive Criticism

## **Model proactive and up-front critiquing etiquette. Advise everyone to start positive with a compliment, then offer honest but objective, well-supported, and practical advice, and then conclude with another commendation. Continuously reinforce the message that no one is served when criticism is withheld; only focused, writing-centered (not writer-centered) commentary will help the writer grow.**

# TIP #2. Vary the Routine

## **Some people might be ready to email a writing sample a week ahead of time to give others a chance to read and critique before the next meeting. Those selections don’t need to be read aloud before the group; you can go straight to discussion. (Hand the writer an annotated hard copy or return by email, with inserted notes, the file they sent you.)**

# TIP #2. vary the routine – CONT’D.

## **Others can pass around copies of a cold read and read it aloud while others jot down notes, then go to discussion. Yet others might simply read a shorter passage for a moment’s worth of specific advice, ask a few general questions without reading at all, or pass altogether that week, participating only in discussion about others’ work. (You may not have time to go over every group member’s project at each meeting anyway.) But don’t let any one member get away with following the same routine every time.**

# TIP #2. vary the routine -CONT’D.

## **Suggest a writing session every now and then: Everybody comes to the meeting, writes for an hour, then convenes to take turns reading part or all of their resulting selection for five minutes and getting one minute of feedback from each member.**

# Tip # 3. do your homework

## **Establish expectations for criticism: When you read the writing of other group members, take notes, writing down questions, suggestions, and compliments. Be specific when you critique, praising a vivid description in particular or recommending more character development with detailed advice.**

# TIP #3 – CONT’D.

## **Focus, however, not on telling others what to do but on asking questions to help *them* decide what to do. If you don’t understand something, or you feel that details are lacking, ask for an explanation or background information. Then, gently advise the author to incorporate their response into the narrative.**

## **Your homework also involves setting your ego aside and acting on others’ critiques. What’s the use of investing so much time and energy in this process if you don’t take feedback to heart?**

# Tip #4. TAKE A BREAK

##

## **At regular intervals, step back from the critiquing cycle to meet just to advise or brainstorm about how to organize notes, do research, or work on character, plot, tone, and so on. Several times a year, go to a book reading together, or watch a movie or a play together and, for homework, draft a “novelization” or a rewrite of a scene and bring it to the next meeting. Compile a list of prompts for when members hit the wall.**

# Tip # 5. Check In

## **Periodically evaluate how the group is going. Are your meetings too often, not often enough, or just right? Too long, not long enough, or ideal? Is someone missing too many meetings or wall-flowering, or does one person dominate them? Is everybody getting what they want out of the experience?**

# TIP #5 – CONT’D.

## **What’s the procedure when somebody’s not fitting in? What do you do when one or more members drop out, or one or more members feel like increasing the number of people in the group? How do you recruit, and how do you decide whether to accept candidates? Establish and review your membership policies.**

## **Above all, remember that although the group is a democratic body that should operate by consensus, you, as the founder, must continue to moderate the proceedings and nudge everyone to always honor its principles and purposes.**

# HAPPY TRAILS TO YOU ON YOUR ROAD TO WRITING!

# HAPPY WRITING!

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