

How to Become a Better Writer

By Craig Lock

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We hope that the following article (which was extracted from a lesson on our Online Creative Writing Course) may be informative and helpful to your e-zine readers, or on your web site. You have permission to publish this article (formatted to 60 characters, approx) electronically or in print. If it helps others "out there" in any way, then we're happy.

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER

By Craig Lock

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

- * To write for pleasure or for profit?
- * To write articles or simply 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?

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 Somebody else said: "No one but a blockhead would write not to be published."...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. 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, wives, "hubbies", etc) can be ever so serious.

We spoke about making a writer out of you. Ask yourself: 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 is your concentration at it's highest level? My body rhythms work best in the early morning, so I'm in bed with my teddy bear and hot "choccie" and pussy cat by 9 p.m. How utterly boring!

When are you most likely to be undisturbed? I have the strangest type of people dropping in to visit "recluse" me. Must be the lot of an artist! Treat your writing seriously. It is your work time, yet people don't seem to understand that. "When are you going to get a proper job?" ask the locals, as they can't seem to understand the strange writer. Nor even my good Aussie friend, Kaye who is visiting at the moment!

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?

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

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. Omit unnecessary words.

HOW DABBLER WRITERS BECOME PROFESSIONALS

They do it regularly: with self discipline and dedication. I may not be one of the best writers around, but I've got dedication and self discipline which comes from motivation, because I love what I do --although it's very hard work. I try to have fun, whilst I try to earn a living.

Top writers WRITE AND REWRITE - many times over, so the words flow better each time. They aim for perfection - very, very hard to achieve; although one can always improve. Every time I go through a manuscript, I change things like repetitive words, incorrect grammar and punctuation to try to get the words to flow better... but one has to draw a halt somewhere, otherwise my books would never get published.

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Craig's various books are available at:

<http://www.novelty-gift.com/> and

The "original" Online Creative Writing Course

<http://www.nzenterprise.com/writer/creative.html>

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