

## **GETTING STARTED . . .**

**Schedule** – Show up to work, because it is your job. Even if you don't feel like it.

-Know your biological clock, but be willing to try options.

-Daily or not? Why? **We become what we repeatedly do.**

-**Stephen King** writes 10 pages a day without fail, even on holidays.

-**Ernest Hemingway** wrote 500 words a day.

- **Motivation gets us started . . . a habit keeps us going.**

*"It is not that we are busy; so are the ants. It's what we are busy about."*

- Henry David Thoreau

*"Your beliefs become your thoughts,*

*Your thoughts become your words,*

*Your words become your actions,*

*Your actions become your habits,*

*Your habits become your values,*

*Your values become your destiny."*

— Mahatma Gandhi

*"Enthusiasm is the electricity of life. How do you get it? You act enthusiastic until you make it a habit."* — Gordon Parks

## **Habit – How to develop your writing ritual?**

- A habit is made up of a cue, the routine, and the reward.

- **Cue** – what can you do that puts you in the mindset? Music? Sunlight and time of day? Candle? Close the door? Over time, you trigger that need to write.

Truman Capote – wrote reclined on a sofa or bed with cigarette and coffee – as he progressed, he switched to tea, then sherry, then martinis. First and second drafts in pencil. Third on typewriter.

-**Ritual** – time, word count, a short story, define it

- **Reward** – define the reward. Cookie? Checking off a list? Marking the calendar. Martinis?

- Jerry Seinfeld advice – Said that to be a better comic, one has to create better jokes, and to create better jokes, one has to write every day. Seinfeld has an entire year on one large page on the wall, but the point is to mark each day of writing with a big red X. You hate to break the chain.

- My daily habit – 500 words in a draft or editing a chapter

- You will have to break other habits to create this one. Come up with your cue, determine the routine, and name the reward. A cue would simply be a timer. Mine is to simply open my novel file – that screams serious.

**Focus** – You have many ideas, usually. Prioritize your projects, pick one, work it through. Most stop when they lose enthusiasm, during the hard parts. The successful push through, like with any job.

**Let It Rip** – You will write hesitantly, totally clueless whether the writing is good, the story worth telling . . . wondering if you ever manage to get this story done whether anyone will buy it . . . or it you could even give it away. Don't do any of this. Clear your head and write hard. Just let it rip. At this point it's all about enjoying the writing, and nothing else. **This is how you fall in love with writing.**

**Personal Development** – Writing for a long time is not experience. (\*\*See Resource List) It's more about seeking growth and never settling for where you are . . . ever. You never arrive.

- Classes
- Conferences
- Workshops
- Subscriptions
- How-to Books
- Critique Groups
- Writing Organizations
- Reading
- Newsletters

***Caveat here: Do NOT get so wound up in how-to stuff that you never enjoy the game. Have fun. (\*\*Father-son-coach baseball example)***

***BIG NOTE:***

***It is only after you have the habit, enjoy the regular writing, and understand the rules of writing, that you can think about becoming a professional writer. A professional writer is one who knows their craft and can then take their habit and knowledge and point it in a marketable direction.***

**Know your Strengths and Shortcomings** – Often not identified before doing the above. My strength is dialogue. My weakness is plotting. But when you read the story, you probably cannot tell any of this.

**Seek Feedback** – Tough skin. Learn to edit, a strong lesson in writing. Hopefully find a mentor. Start or join a critique group, or more than one. Avoid those who love you unless they seriously write. Avoid the nonwriters. Avoid those who will make excuses for you. (\*\*\*)See Resource List)

**Read Voraciously** – Primarily in your genre.

- You do not have to read everything and everybody.
- Study why the work appeals.
- Read good work and avoid the weak, because you become what you read.
- Mark up your best books.
- Do NOT compare yourself. It's an upward venture, not a means to feel down.

**Volume matters** –

- Read 10x more than you write.
- Write 10x more than you save after editing.
- Publish only your best, maybe a tenth of what you edited, polished to a fine sheen.

**Keep a notebook.** Jot your daily tasks, note your ideas as they come, write down great phrases, remember people/books/marketing tricks/references (books, blogs, classes, websites, podcasts).

**Absorb great advice** . . . and try to be around those who are successful, even if just online.

**The Writing Itself . . . .**

**-Organize your ideas**

**-Be concise** - William Zinnser – “Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, pompous frills and meaningless jargon.” Get rid of unnecessary words, phrases and sentences. Be ruthless in your editing.

**-But only after you've written a crappy first draft.**

**-Write with force** – Avoid lightweight or vague words. Use active verbs and active voice. Avoid adverbs. Avoid passive voice. Practice SHOWING versus TELLING. Do not be afraid to write well and hard. Editing is your friend.

**-Write for the reader as well as yourself** - While you must have passion, if the reader isn't entertained, the story is worthless.

**-Dig for emotion.** You'll tell instead of show it several times before you realize the telling is two-dimensional. Find three books with the emotion you want to evoke, mark them up, dog-ear them. What made you angry, cry, love, feel despair? For instance, naming the emotion is 90 % of the time telling instead of showing. Show the emotional traits instead.

**-Edit like a crazed person** – Edit as many times as it takes. Do not worry about over-editing. Edit assorted different ways (on screen, on paper, orally, orally by someone else)

**-Know the rules of grammar and creative writing** – Punctuation, noun/verb agreement, voice, verb tense, pronoun references, misplaced or dangling modifiers, head hopping, author talking versus character, and so on. Chicago Manual of Style.

## **ATTITUDE . . .**

**-Believe you can be good enough** – Many people are talented. The magic comes from what you do with the talent. Diligence usually wins the day.

**-Be an incessant observer** – Live with a writer's eye and a writer's ear. (Notebook at the ready)

**-Be willing to experience life** – See an opportunity to do something different? Experience it. Deepens your writing well. When doing anything new, do it as a writer.

**-Write what you love rather than what is selling**

**-Write through the fears** – What others will say. What your spouse thinks. What the readers will think if you kill someone important in the story. Present tense versus past tense. Rejection.

**-There is no writers block** – Sit through it and make yourself keep writing. Write something else without getting up, until the flow starts back again. Consider stopping at the end of each day in the middle of a chapter, paragraph, sentence so you are raring to go the next. Consider reading your genre to feel empowered with good writing. (Like watching good sports.) Change from computer to pen or pencil. Just...don't stop and cave to it.

**-Love to write** – Whether you publish or not. If you want to quit because you cannot publish, then do so.

**-Love to edit** – Each time ought to make you excited about being brighter, shinier, better. Teach yourself not to dread it.

**-Set your standards high** – Do not let yourself settle, thinking you are not good enough to demand more.

**-Let passion for the craft rule the day** – Despite rejection

### **Read:**

**25 Habits of Highly Successful Writers: Insider Secrets from Top Screenwriters and Novelists – By Karl Iglesias and Andrew McAleer - <http://www.rochestermoviemakers.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/25-habits-of-highly-successful-writers.pdf>**

**Daily Routines of 12 Famous Writers, by James Clear - <http://jamesclear.com/daily-routines-writers>**

***C. Hope Clark***

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There's something about being alone with your thoughts that makes ideas **pop**. But, alone at home it can be hard to find answers. Find the **encouragement** you need to **keep the flow** going.

## Let Hope help with...

- Writing Habits
- Writer's Block
- Character Development
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- and more!

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