

Make Your Story



A SELF-HELP GUIDE TO STORY WRITING

BY: MARITZA MIXON

GAME PLAN TO GET IT DONE

This is just a guide. Take as much or as little time as you need.

Masterpieces move at their own pace!

Weeks 1 & 2: Creative Weeks

Weeks 3 & 4: Sorting Weeks

Weeks 5 & 6: Grammar Weeks

Weeks 7 & 8: Drafting Weeks

Week 9: Congratulate Yourself!

CREATIVITY WEEKS

This is your book! Your paper! Your journal! So these should be your thoughts, your intelligence, your feelings, and your story. This is your time to shine. A time when everything gets to come from you. You take full credit!

This is a place where there aren't any rights or wrongs. Just your opinion and your right to express it. Many times we take so much time focusing on the big picture that we do not take time to plan it in order to attain it. Paul Graham Y Combinator once said "perfectionism is often an excuse for procrastination". The important part is to get started; even if it is not perfect. You can perfect your thoughts as you go. Worried about it not being perfect?

Think of it this way-it is better to revise than to never start. Just throw all of your thoughts on your paper. We will sort it all out later, but for now just think and write. Even if your thoughts interrupt each other-just let it flow.

When going off on these tangents make sure you have set your tangent separately from what you have been writing just in case you realize it is currently useless. While tangents may seem completely irrelevant at the moment, many times they can be put to great use later on. Sometimes our creativity draws conclusions and brings things together we may not understand at the moment. Many times as a writer my tangents have seemed off topic, but those tangents end up being my next book, or seminar topic. Keep your tangents in an organized way.

You may find yourself looking for them whether it be tomorrow, or 4 months from now; however, I am not telling you to start a tangent hoarding collection. Even if you keep an online version, keep your tangents for a while- who knows what they will become later. All creative thoughts should be recognized even if it is later on. Just remember to bring it back in if you find yourself going off the deep end. Respect your thoughts and move on.

When to take a break. Many people find it difficult to write, or even think of the right things to say. There are cures for this writer's block; here's a few, so find out what works for you.

1. Be in a quiet place and just let it roll
2. Go do something enjoyable
3. Watch/ read something inspirational
4. Take a break (completely unplug your mind)
5. Ramble to yourself
6. Listen to others

For my extremely neat people:
If you cannot ramble, then organize it! It is okay! . As a writer, I prefer an "organized mess" approach to writing. I write my thoughts on different papers, but I know where to find each one. If you cannot resist organizing then sort as you go, but if organization is not your thing have no fear! The next step is sorting out your creative ideas.

FIND A METHOD THAT WORKS FOR YOU.

Here are some prompts that may help you begin to write:

What would you like to write about? (Write any and everything you can think of)

Why is it important to you?

What would you like other people to gain from reading your story?

Are you writing this story for someone, or a group of people? Who, or what group?

What is your end goal for the story? To inform others? To educate others? To inspire? To persuade? To vent?

SORTING WEEKS

Tedious but necessary

Let's get started!

1. Sort all of your ideas with common ones. It could be easier if you label or number them (ex: idea 1)
2. Congratulate yourself because you mastered the first step!
3. Now look at what you wrote about your first idea and turn those ideas into sentence. Give your reader ALL THE DETAILS! Remember 5-8 sentences is a paragraph, so if you have reached 5-8 sentences you have done amazing!
4. Congratulate yourself even closer!
5. Continue this until all of your ideas have turned into paragraphs. Do not worry about the grammar yet!
6. Congratulate yourself because you did it! You sorted it all out!

Tip: Instead of just saying "I like this" try including some details. Why do you like it? What makes it special? Is there a reason behind why you like? Add these to your story so the reader can understand. Details, details, details

Remember: The main idea is the important idea you want the reader to understand from your idea. The details of the idea help make reading more enjoyable, and brings clarity to the reader. Details help us understand. Details can make stories vivid and full of life.

Look over your paragraphs one by one. Can you understand the main idea easily? Is it too wordy? As the writer, it can be easier to understand what you are trying to say because you wrote it, but we want others to understand as well. Your story is too great to not be heard! Don't be afraid to ask a friend for read over your work because 2 sets of eyes are better than 1. Make any changes you feel are necessary.

Tip: Consider your own style while writing and how you want to come across to your audience. If you are having trouble deciding, picture the audience in front of you. How would you speak? Would you use slang, proper English, another language, be more direct, or be more indirect? Let the thesaurus be your best friend. Take a moment to think about anything that might need to be changed.

One common issue in writing is repetition. Some try to reiterate a point by saying it in a different way, but you have to ask if this would bore your audience. In this case, sometimes less is more; it could get extremely boring rereading the same thing over and over again. Rereading can be very boring especially when you have other things to do. Thrice is alright, but three pages of the same exact thing is not okay. Are you getting tired of me talking about repetition? You got it the first time right? Great! Say your point, give vivid details and then move on to your next great point.

GRAMMAR WEEKS

Well if you are going to say it, say it correctly.

Mean what you say, and say what you mean. Nothing is worse than not being able to understand a book due to grammatical error. Everyone has read at least one book and realized an error, whether it be a spelling or grammatical error. This is the time we seek out our errors and fix our uh-oh's. We are not going to go over an entire grammar class in one book, but we are going to go over some of the main problems we all run into. As you read this section get ready to make some corrections.

Is it an adverb or adjective?

Adjectives- complement nouns

- ex: the girl has pretty hair.

What is pretty here? The hair. The hair of who or what? The girl. The girl is a noun, so the word pretty in this sentence is an adjective.

Adverbs- complement verbs

- ex: I wanted a chocolate bar badly.

What badly? Badly wanted. Wanted is a verb, so badly is an adverb. Tip: Usually, not always, words that end in -ly are adverbs

Remember: Adjectives usually work with NOUNS while adverbs usually work with VERBS

Check Your Work: Are all of your adjectives and adverbs used correctly? Awesome! Let's move on.

Punctuation is everything ...

We all know about run on sentences. Truth is sometimes we do not believe we made our point, so we keep on going. As a writer, I realized one main reason behind run-on sentences: *improper comma usage*. Take a look at the punctuation chart below, and compare it to your story.

(.) Period: ending a sentence

(!) Exclamation Mark: strong feeling or raised voice

- generally should not be used in formal writings

("..") Quotation Marks: Quoting someone's words exactly

(;) Semi colon: Jointing 2 complete thoughts in one sentences

(,) Comma: lists a series, can be placed before coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so), can be placed after a dependent clause that starts a sentence, or can be used to avoid confusion

(:) Colon: introduces new information

(') Apostrophe: can be used as a contraction of two words, and can show ownership of a thing

- ex: that's Mark's toy

(...) Ellipsis: can be used to deliberately leaving out information, interrupt a thought or create suspense

(*) Asterisk: can be used to replace letters in words, or as a footnote notification

Bullet Point: summarize information, or make information clear to the reader

(/) Stroke: can be used to give a choice, or to distinct lines in poetry

- ex: "butter/margarine"

Now that we have some of the basic punctuations mapped out, let's smash some writing myths.

Myth #1: NEVER START A SENTENCE WITH "BECAUSE"

You may absolutely begin a sentence with because, although, or however if you use a comma in between two full thoughts

- .ex: Although I went to sleep late, I still feel well.

When this sentence is flipped and the comma is taken out, it still makes sense. This is the only time you may use a dependent clause in the beginning of the sentence, and do not forget that comma!

Myth #2: COMMAS ARE ONLY USED FOR PAUSING

Here are some comma rules you may not know about.

Comma rule 1: listing

- ex: I need to buy grapes, apples, pineapples, and oranges

Comma rule 2: To connect independent clauses with a conjunction

- ex: I do not like apples, but I like oranges

Tip: Common conjunctions are For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So

Comma Rule 3: Emphasis or extra information

- ex: My mailbox, which my grandmother bought me, has been stolen.

Tip: If you took away the words in the commas the sentence's meaning will be the same

Comma Rule 4: When a dependent clause comes before an independent clauses in a sentence (see previous page)

Comma Rule 5: To avoid confusion

- ex: I like purple socks, not red ones.

Check your writing: Let's take a moment to check your writing to see if you can add any of these rules. These rules can help add emphasis, and excitement to your writing. You can also choice to keep it simple. Your story; your choice! This is also a good time to use spell check and fix any spelling errors.

Let's move on to something technology cannot also fix in writing- CONTEXT

20 Words To Understand

- Than: compares things
- Then: show consequence (if...then)
- There: in, at, or place or position
- Their: belonging to someone else
- They're: contraction for they are
- Lay: present tense of lay
- Lie: past tense of lay
- Who: He, she, we, they
- Whom: Him, her, us, them
- Nor: and not
- Farther: a distance that can be measured
- Further: a distance that cannot be measured
- Incomparable: impossible comparison
- Affect: an influence
- Effect: the result of an influence
- May: more possibility
- Might: more uncertainty
- Can: ability
- Continual: occurring often
- Continuous: occurring without ceasing

15 Vocabulary Words to Know

- Adversity: misfortune
- Brandish: to wave threateningly
- Concoction a mixture of various ingredients
- Defiance: utter disobedience
- Disdain: to be unworthy of respect
- Egregious: extremely bad
- Engross: to absorb all the attention
- Impending: something about to happen
- Meticulous: carefully paying attention to detail
- Persistent: continuous
- Quell: putting an end to something
- Repugnant: absolutely unacceptable
- Scarcity: short of supplies
- Tactic: a carefully planned strategy
- Waver: an unsteady motion

Check your writing: can you use any of these words?

Tip: use a thesaurus to swap out words to make your story more attractive to readers

5 Misused Phrases

Meaning: I have absolutely no interest

- Incorrect : I could care less
- Correct : I could not care any less

Meaning: Two things are the same

- Incorrect : One in the same
- Correct : One and the same

Meaning: Everything is just as worse as the last thing

- Incorrect: Each one worse than the next
- Correct: Each one worse than the last

Meaning: Covering all possibilities

- Incorrect : For all intensive purposes
- Correct : For all intents and purposes

Meaning: speaking with or in a conversation with

- Incorrect: Conversating with
- Correct: Conversing with

DRAFTING WEEKS

You just completed a lot of work.

Every writer needs time to look at their work. This is not your finished piece, but you are almost there. Take this time to read your creation. You should read your draft four times minimum.

- The first time, read it with no expectations. Do not make corrections. Read it, and see how it flows. Most importantly be proud of yourself!
- The second time, have a pen in hand. Make corrections to any ideas you may want to add, or reconstruct. You may also use font color to make corrections if you are using technology. Go
- The third time, fix any grammatical errors you may have missed
- .The fourth time,make sure it's perfect to you!

For a book: include introduction For a paper: do not forget proper citing and labeling

YOU ARE OFFICIALLY
AN AUTHOR, WRITER,
EDITOR, AND STORY
TELLER

-CONGRATULATIONS!

This book was written because everyone deserves to have the tools available to them in order to make their story. Not all learners are great writers, but everyone has a story to tell. Often times writing can be therapeutic as well. Many times people give up on their story because they are not sure where to start, or how to finish. This book was designed to be an easy way to guide learners through the writing process.

At Make Your Story we believe every story is a notable one. We strive to build, support, and encourage independent learners in hopes of creating a better educated, more resilient, and empowered generation.

Congratulations on completing your paper, novel, book, or story. May you continue to share your stories with the world!

- Maritza Mixon

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