

# How to Become a Successful Writer

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Michael Masterson is a writer. Why? Because he writes. He's also a multi-millionaire who knows what he's talking about. See what he thinks makes a writer a real writer.

How to Write a Book and Become What You Want to Be

You want to write a book? Yes? Well, listen up!

"If you want to be a writer, you have to write."

I was 16 years old when my father said those kind-and-cruel words to me. I never forgot them.

The first time I can remember wanting to be a writer, I was 11 or 12 years old. I'd written a poem for Sister Mary Something at school. My rhyming quatrain (AABB) was titled, pretentiously, "How Do I Know the World Is Real?" I was at the kitchen table when my father started reading it over my shoulder. I felt anxious. My father was a credentialed writer, an award-winning playwright, a Shakespearean scholar, and a teacher of literature, including poetry. I'd seen him, on Saturday mornings, hunched over student essays, muttering and occasionally reading out loud passages to my mother that sounded perfectly good to me but elicited derisive laughter from them.

My father understood the secret-to-me clues of good writing. I didn't feel at all comfortable having my fragile young poem exposed to the awesome danger of his critical mind. So there I sat, hoping he would go away. But he didn't. I felt his hand on my shoulder, gentle and warm. "You may have a talent for writing," he said.

I wrote lots of poetry in the months that followed, and began to think of myself as a writer. I liked that feeling. But soon other interests - touch football, the Junior Police Club, girls - crowded themselves into my life. Gradually, I wrote less and less. I still yearned to be a writer and so I began to feel guilty about not writing.

To assuage my guilt, I promised myself that my other activities were "life experience," and that I needed life experience to become the good writer I wanted to be. In developing this excuse for not writing, I was building a structure of self-deception that many people live inside when they abandon their dreams. From the outside, it looks like you are doing nothing. But from the inside, you know that you are in the process of becoming, which, you convince yourself, is the next best thing to being.

That was the shape of my delusion when my father said, "If you want to be a writer, you have to write. A writer is someone who writes."

So many people live their lives failing to become what they want to be because they can't find the time to get started. How many times have you heard someone say that, one day, they will do what they always wanted to do - travel the world or paint paintings or write a book? And when you hear sentiments like those, what do you feel? Happy because you are confident that one day they will accomplish their long-held goal? Or sort of sad for them because you are pretty sure they never will?

And what about you? What is it that you want to be but haven't become? What goal or project or task do you keep talking about accomplishing yet never do?

When my father told me that "writers write," he was saying two things:

- I had lost the right to call myself a writer when I stopped writing.
- I could regain the title the moment I started writing again. If you spend a while ruminating on this, you may find it both disturbing and liberating.

I was disturbed, because I wanted my father to say that the way to become a writer was to read books about writing and then take courses on writing and then perhaps become an apprentice to a writer and then begin writing little bits here and there. And that, finally, after 3 or 10 years of education, preparation, and qualification, I would somehow automatically be a writer.

But as long as I was studying writing or preparing myself to be a writer - and yet not actually writing - I wasn't a writer. It was as simple as that.

Lots of people feel that they can keep their dreams alive and derive some of the ego satisfaction they hope their dreams will give them simply by living in a state of becoming. "I am not yet the person I want to become, but so long as I continue to express a wish to become that person, I keep that possibility alive and deserve credit for doing so."

To become a writer, the first thing I had to do was refuse to accept any psychological credit for wanting to be a writer. After the initial disappointment of giving up the delusion that becoming was as good as being, I had no choice but to jump over the becoming stage and simply be.

I did that by writing. Every day. And when I learned the secret of getting up early and writing first thing in the morning - hours before other people trailed into work - that's when I began to really live my dream.

These days, I usually get to the office between 6:30 and 7:00, and the first thing I do is fire up the computer. There is no better feeling than to get going when the office is dark and quiet, usually by making entries into my journal but sometimes by tackling something tougher, like a book chapter. Of the many pleasures of being a writer - finishing a manuscript, collaborating with editors, seeing a copy of the book for the first time, and even making it to best-seller lists - the purest and finest for me has always been the first few hours of the morning when I am in that writerly groove.

The best part about being a writer, I have discovered, is the writing. (It is also the worst part, but that's another story.) And this is true, I think, for every skill or profession.

The easiest way to become something special is also the fastest: Just start doing it. Don't wait for the "right" time. Don't worry about not being qualified. And don't worry about getting paid for it. Just start doing it.

- You want to become a musician? Start playing that piano.
- You want to become a philanthropist? Start investing your money.
- You want to become a basketball player? Start shooting those hoops.

- Don't spend another minute talking about what you will do... one day.

[Ed. Note: Learn how you can be part of an exclusive group of 25 to 50 ambitious businesspeople that Michael will be leading through an elite 5-day program that can help you dramatically increase the profitability of your business here.]