

# The Top Ten Rules for Writers

Contributed by Anne Wayman  
Saturday, 25 March 2006  
Last Updated Saturday, 08 November 2008

You want to write a book? Or, maybe you want to write a short story, poem, play, or screenplay. Whether you're writing fiction or non-fiction, there are certain things you need to do if you want to be successful. Here's my top ten list for successful writing.

You want to write a book? Or, maybe you want to write a short story, poem, play, or screenplay. Whether you're writing fiction or non-fiction, there are certain things you need to do if you want to be successful. Here's my top ten list for successful writing.

Write often, all the time, everyday! Write in secret, in public, take notes at family reunions and at the theatre. Become the weirdo who is known for always having a pen, a pad and a roving eye.

Show, don't tell, use concrete and specific details and all five senses

Plot should be secondary to strong characters, but still be present.

Read broadly, read deeply, read in a variety of genres, read consciously, READ

Keep writing, especially, when desperation, depression and doubt are your three best friends. Push on!

Read your work aloud to find mistakes and places where sentences and dialogue don't flow.

While you are in the midst of writing a novel, ignore number 4. Reading other people's prose and stories can dilute your own voice.

Know your subject. Readers will not trust (i.e. read) authors who write a story about racecars, but don't know the difference between a V8 and a V6 engine.

No two scenes should create the same tone or have the same purpose. If you have a sentence that conveys an idea such as, "She was a good writer", cut out any sentence with the same subject. "She could create a page of beautiful prose whenever she wanted."

Make your readers ask big questions. Does money make happiness? And small questions. "Is she going to get kicked out of her apartment?"