

Article 10 – Doing the Work

By doing the work, I mean now physically getting on with putting the words onto paper, or into a document on your word processor.

We have discussed motivation, emotion (our own and the characters), we have recognised the voices in our head, criticising us, and hindering our progress. We have also looked at plot, chapter breakdown, opening sentences, characterization and a host of other aspects of the writing process.

Before I delve deeper into the less concrete aspects of writing, I feel the time is ripe to 'get mechanical'. And by that I mean, simply, the actual process of writing itself.

Take yourself seriously. Without this key commitment, very little in the way of novel progression is likely to happen. Having cleared the way emotionally, and having recognized your own talent, and inspiration, your next commitment is to your writing time.

Whether you feel connected to your higher inspiration or not, whether you feel you could look Dickens in the eye or not, whether you can envision yourself writing the magic words 'The End' or not, you will still have to WRITE.

Make a simple promise to yourself to sit at your desk, switch on the computer, or pick up a pen, and write. Word follows word, sentence follows sentence, and paragraph follows paragraph. And that's the truth. There is no other way.

It is not enough to live in the future and keep telling yourself and those around you that you have a brilliant idea, and that one day, when you have the time, you might write that novel. Today is yesterday's future, and tomorrow's past. So today is the day. Finding the time is your gift to yourself. Finding the time is proving to yourself that you know how to prioritize and categorize and choose. Today you will, instead of switching on your TV, write.

Write even when you don't feel inspired and take refuge in all the tricks and tools we have discussed in earlier articles.

At this stage of your process, the quality takes a back seat to consistency. And by consistency I mean, becoming the kind of writer you can rely on - one that writes!

Learning to be a writer is no different from learning to play the piano. It is no different from deciding to sport on a regular basis. It all takes practice and it takes the commitment to building new habits. Healthy habits.

You will find that as the days go by, and you become accustomed to you, the writer, that your skills will improve. You will find the sentences flowing more easily, paragraphs becoming more complete, and you will discover a hidden vocabulary, that has lived inside your head, waiting for you to tap into it.

But more than this, writing will become an integral part of your life, a solid part of your day.

You will become comfortable with you, the writer.