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## What does it take to be a WRITER

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Write. While this may seem obvious it's amazing how many aspire to write, but never actually put pen to paper. They may outline a story, imagine detailed characters, locations, sequels and prequels, but they never actually flesh out a chapter. To be a writer, you must write. You can not plan to write, study writing or network with writers. Writers may use computers or typewriters or notebooks for their craft. They may write short stories, novels, articles, blogs, journal entries, fiction or non fiction. They may write in English, Spanish, Dutch, German, French or Portuguese. Despite all their diversity, the one thing all writers have in common: they write. How To Write.

Research is particularly important for non fiction writers, but mustn't be ignored by fiction writers. There are a few references to factual events, even in the most fantastical tales. Failure to do adequate research will undermine your credibility and you risk losing your readers. It is important to validate the information you find with second or third sources, especially if you rely on Internet research to find facts. Be wary of sources that are unknown to you and if other works are cited, check them out as well.

Inspiration can be found if you are willing to look. You have to open your eyes and take in the world. Ask yourself "What If" throughout the day to discover story ideas. Don't rely on your memory to store all the intriguing thoughts you have, rather, jot them down in a notebook you carry with you. When the time comes that you need an idea, you'll have a ready supply at your fingertips. Not all of your ideas will blossom into gardens of inspiration; some buds will never open their tender petals. Take what they give, and move onto the next idea.

Time to write every single day. Writing every day is exercise for your mind just like walking is exercise for your heart. Your mind will grow stronger and writing will become easier with practice. Take time to plan what you want to accomplish, set goals for your writing (2 pages a day, 1 article a day, etc.) and make your time as productive as possible by eliminating distractions. Also, give yourself the tools to achieve your goals and use what works best for you: an outline, story synopsis, character profiles or timelines.

Edit within reason. Many writers advocate relentless editing, shearing away scenes, characters and subplots that seem trivial in the harsh light of day. This makes me think of Writing Bulimia; binging on words only to purge them later. I write freely in my first draft, but not so freely that my work has extra limbs to lop off. If I edit as mercilessly as some advise, I

would have a one legged story, hobbling no where fast. Rather, edit with care, with an eye on quality and then enlist the help of a professional to find the passive phrases and dangling, whatever.

Rejoice. You are a writer. You have taken that brave step to realizing your dream while others falter. You have taken action, writing each day, doing research and editing your work. Your work, like you THE WRITER, is a work in progress, so forgive any flaws. Rejoice in what you have accomplished and thrill in knowing you have created something tangible where nothing existed before. Creative Writing