

The 100% absolutely true things I've learned about writing

Spear Communications

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1. It never gets easy

Writing is a struggle with your own mind and body, and although you get better and faster, writing never gets easy.

2. It's a job

People who've never written for a living have romantic ideas, but the pros know you've got to show up and deliver every day—because writing is a job.

3. The trick is that there are no tricks

Don't count on that viral post or SEO tweak to launch you into stardom, because there is no magical short-cut. (See number 2.)

4. Good writing is editing

Nobody gets it right the first time, so be ruthless and unsentimental toward your work: write, re-write, and re-write again.

5. You fall in love with all the wrong things

It's perverse, but precisely the words you adore will be the ones you must cut.

6. Failure is your constant companion

You'll make many mistakes and turn out work that no one is interested in reading, so learn and never give up.

7. You never, ever stop doubting yourself

Until you're published, you'll tell yourself "I'm not a real writer"; when you're published, you'll think "real writers get published in prestigious magazines"; when you're published in a prestigious magazine, you'll decide that "real writers are people who win big literary prizes"; and when you win a big award, you'll say "one day they'll realize I'm a fraud."

8. You're your own worst enemy

I don't know why we writers are so hard on ourselves, but we all have to learn not to listen to the critic in our heads.

9. How people judge you will have little to do with writing

Almost anyone can spell, use proper grammar, and form a decent sentence: people adore ideas, personality, characters, or a subject—not the technical aspects of writing that you mastered in university and think (wrongly) matter the most.

10. Most of the things you've learned are useless, or wrong

Your M.A. In English Lit. has taught you nothing about the book industry, building an audience, and marketing your work: the sooner you accept this, the better.

11. You need to be business-minded, organized and disciplined

Inspiration sounds nice, but it doesn't pay your bills and you can't serve it to your children for dinner.

12. There are a lot of good reasons to quit

Some days, being a writer seems stupid, selfish, destructive and irrational—but on the good days it's toil.

13. You can always make more words

No matter how tough things get, we can always make more words: they are cheap to manufacture. (Thanks to Johnny B. Truant and Sean Platt, in "Write. Publish. Repeat.", for this one.)



- Wayne K. Spear is the Founder and President of Spear Communications. This article is part of his ongoing series called "Thought Bombs."

