



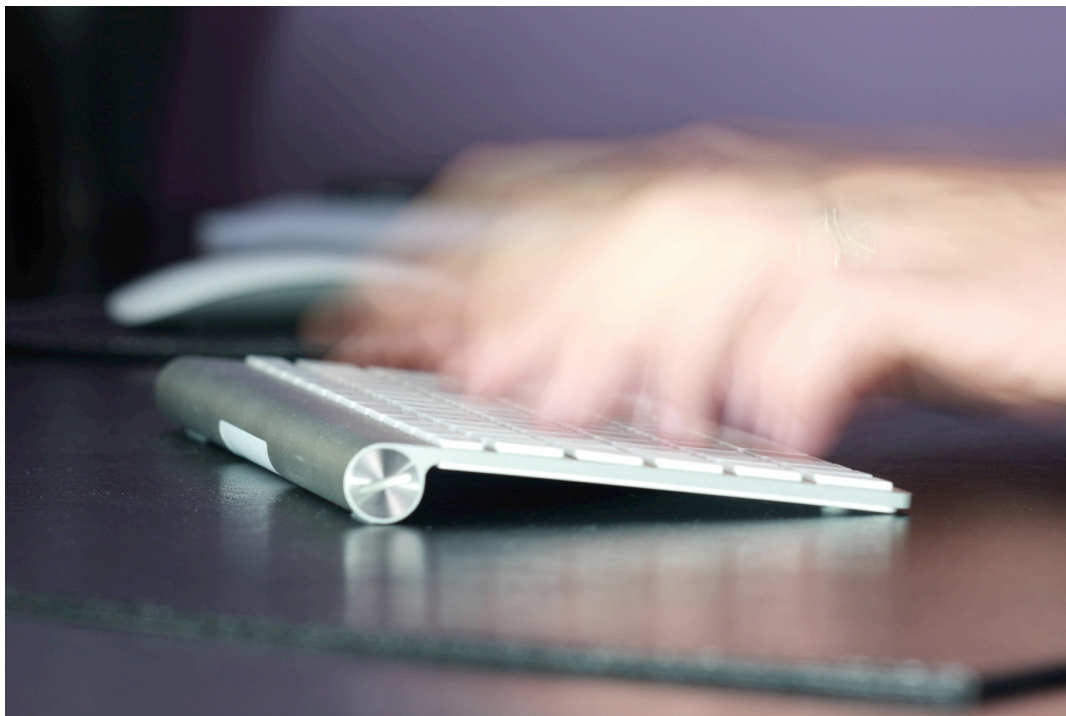
The 10 Things Absolutely Every

Aspiring Author Needs to Know

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Intro

You have a really great idea that would make a wonderful book.

You have started dozens of short stories and character sketches, and have lots of great ideas for books that you would like to write, only to leave the files unfinished and abandoned on your hard drive.

New characters keep popping up in your head at the most inopportune times, and you often lose them because you are too busy at work, driving the kids to school, trying to fall asleep or working out.

You have wanted to be a writer since you were a kid, and now you are 40.

You have a unique life experience that most can't relate to, identify with, or may not even believe if you told them.

Your friends and family tell you that you should write down your stories.



If you can relate to any of these scenarios, then you are a budding author who can and should take a chance and start writing the book that you dream about. We all have stories to tell, but only the truly dedicated and motivated ever write theirs down and then confidently share it with the world.

As an aspiring author, your job is to get the pretty words, descriptive phrases and engaging dialogue out of your head and into the soft glowing light of your computer screen. Start somewhere, anywhere, and don't worry about the process, the word count, the order, editing, character names, or that the story may describe you and your life too closely.

Truth: People want to hear what you have to say. They want to get to know your characters, learn their backstory, and get lost in your elaborate scenes. No one has to know what is real and what is fantasy, or whether or not you made a mistake in the story, or if the main character is supposed to have an accent. This is escapism for most if you are writing fiction. You are in charge. You own this. Be proud and write!

If you have read this far, here are ten more reasons to keep you motivated to put that pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard... right now.



Things to Do List:

- *Write an outline*
- *Identify a beginning, middle and end to the story*
- *Choose your writing tools*
- *Develop a routine and commit to following it*
- *Take detailed notes as ideas evolve*
- *Write!*

#1 Your Idea is Good

If the idea is interesting and exciting enough to you that you want to write about it, you can be sure there is an audience out there that will want to read it. And others that will not. Who cares! No one is judging anyone here. You can't control this part. They can read it if they want to. And within that group, you are bound to find a few that will love it. Yay, fans!

Think of the last five books that you really enjoyed. Now think of five more that you did not finish because they were terrible, or that you just couldn't get into. Hard to do, isn't it? That is in part because you tend to gravitate towards genres and titles that you enjoy. Do you realize how many people just can't read or get through *The Game of Thrones* book series? Yet, it is one of the most successful and addictive television series of all time! That guy is seriously set for life. If you build it, they will come.

You may not have the best idea in the world, but it is yours and it matters.

#2 Stop Listening to That Negative Voice in the Back of Your Mind

You can do this. They're just words after all, carefully chosen words that tell a story. You know that you want to write this nagging idea into a story. And it is not as hard to do as you may think. It just takes dedication and motivation, just like anything else you put your mind to. And a plan.

It's also breaking a big thing down into smaller more manageable chunks. Figure out a routine, whether it is writing every morning for 15 minutes, every evening before bed, or talking into a voice recorder while driving, taking a walk, or cleaning the house. You can find a lot of time in smaller increments to work on your book. Ten minutes is more than zero minutes.

Don't listen to the negative voice in the back of your mind that tells you that your ideas are worthless, you'll never have the time, you are too busy with work and life, and that no one will ever want to read it anyway. There are plenty of unfortunate people in the world who fall for that nonsense. Don't be one of them. Stop making excuses and write!

#3 You are Capable of Telling a Great Story

The world can always use fresh new stories, or creative spins on old ones. Lucky for you, there are many examples of stories you can use for inspiration and direction.

Did you know that there are only 7 main story plots in the world that get recycled over and over again throughout history? Every book, movie and play you can think of falls into one of these categories:



1. Overcoming the Monster

Horror, thrillers, war stories, westerns and science fiction use this form. In this case, a huge threat to a group or community is met by a hero, who fights the beast over and over until a final victory is had at the end.

2. Rags to Riches

Think *Annie* or *Pretty Woman*, where an immature character is frowned upon by others and experiences a series of adventures and setbacks until they face their fears and persevere in the end. They become a changed person, often finding love.

3. The Quest

Characters endure complicated journeys from one place to another that result in transformation in stories like *The Hunger Games* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

4. Voyage and Return

This is a story of transformation through travel and homecoming. A classic example is *The Wizard of Oz*.



5. Comedy

This one is a performance that pits two opposing characters or groups against each other in an amusing conflict with antics.

6. Tragedy

This is a story where the hero takes a journey, but has a weakness that keeps them from reaching their goal. They are doomed from the start and eventually meet despair or death in the end.

7. Rebirth

This is a story of renewal, like a tragedy, but where a hero realizes their error before it is too late.

Identify the plot type that best fits your idea, even mix and match types and genres. Then create conflict and make it your own.

#4 The Hardest Part is Writing Your Idea Down in its Entirety

This book writing adventure actually has a process. Begin your story by planning and writing an outline. Your story needs a beginning, middle and end. List all of the things you want to include under each section. These can become chapters, but for now they will guide your story evolution.

Next, start taking detailed notes as you begin to flesh out your story. Ideas will start coming at you quickly and you don't want to lose any of them. Make note of setting, characters, names, backstory, bits of clever dialogue, snippets of scenes between characters, symbols, references, even screen captures of images that come to mind that may help you visualize someone or something. This will be a growing document, so keep it backed up and in a safe place.

Now keep writing, even if you have moments or days when it is all crap. Set a schedule and try to stick to it (weekday evenings after the kids are in bed, weekends, late nights with a glass of wine, whatever works for you and that you look forward to). Write for as long as it takes to finish, even if it is weeks, months or years. Don't delete anything! Don't re-read it or attempt to edit at all. Keep pushing until you have a rough draft down. Things may be out of order, incomplete, or not seem to fit in at all. That's okay. Keep taking notes to guide you.

And for the love of God, back all of this up in multiple places! On a hard drive, cloud drive, print a hardcopy, and email a copy to yourself and your mother. You do not want to risk losing any of it.



#5 You Don't Have to Write a Story in Order

Start writing about what you know, scenes and dialogue, characters and settings, all the things that come to you and make you want to do this in the first place. As you put these words down, your story will grow from here. It is inevitable that the more you write, the more ideas you will have to expand on what you've written. Characters and bits of story may begin to appear faster than you can keep up with. This is a good thing.

The story doesn't have to be in order. Leave that up to editing later on. Start with the last chapter so you know where you are going. Keep writing and taking detailed notes to make the process easier later. Break your manuscript up into chapters or parts and fill in where you can first and worry about the gaps later. Some days you may want to start a new chapter, others you may be more into writing the ending.

If you find yourself stuck or struggling to come up with or finish an idea, start asking questions. Why is this important? What does this character care about? What do you want the reader to understand about a particular thing? What do you not want the reader to discover until the very end? What motivates the main character?

#6 Finishing the First Draft Will Feel Wonderful, Exhilarating and Scary

Congratulations! You have completed the first draft of your book. It's an absolute mess, but no worry. Enjoy the feeling of accomplishment. Sit back and take a deep breath or jump up and down screaming. Completing a first draft is a huge accomplishment and you are one of the few who have made it this far.

A draft can be 500 words (think children's book) or 250,000 words, whatever it takes to tell your tale. For now, this isn't about word count and chapters.

After you are done reveling in the initial high of accomplishment, don't put this away to never look at again. There is more to this process. Do take the time to recharge and rejuvenate before diving into edit mode. This may be a few days, weeks or months depending on you and your situation. Just know that the longer you wait, the less likely you will continue on. Procrastination can become your worst enemy.

Now is the time to set some goals. Do you want to publish this story? Do you want to publish it yourself or try a more traditional route? This is the time to find the motivation to see this book writing all the way to the end.



#7 Don't Edit Your Own Book

Now that your story is complete and you have filled in the gaps and put things in a good order of time and tale, it is time to have your manuscript edited. Whatever you decide to do, don't just rely on a self-edit of your own book. You are too close to the story to see what can be obvious issues or inconsistencies to outsiders.

And save a new version every time you make a change. You don't want to save over a version and then decide you liked that paragraph on page 88 you deleted yesterday. Oh well!

You can ask a trusted friend or colleague to review it for free or choose to pay someone professionally for real constructive feedback. If you don't want to spend a lot of money, consider looking into author swaps where you can trade sections of your story for constructive criticism by other authors while you read theirs. Your best bet for a guaranteed good edit is to pay someone you don't know to professionally edit your manuscript. Often friends and family, while they can be huge support networks, are not a good choice because they will not give you the feedback you need and may not be true to sharing what they really think in an effort to protect you. There will be plenty of time for friends and family to read it later.



Understand that there are many levels to editing a manuscript. And the cost can vary greatly depending on what you want to do. If you are considering the road to self-publishing, you will have to pay for this service eventually. There are editors out there who will do a great job reading and correcting grammar and punctuation as well as providing a detailed review and summary of suggested edits for a reasonable fee.

Determine what is best for your book and plan to pay for this service. You don't want to miss the opportunity to make a good book great.

Realize that your book will never ever be completely done in your opinion. Every time you read your own words, there will inevitably be something you want to rewrite or delete or add. Resist the urge and recognize when your story is complete.

#8 Don't Compare Yourself to Others

There is a good chance that your story will be one that has been told before by someone else. Another western zombie love story set in Mazatlan. Remember the seven main story plots? Resist the urge to compare yourself to others.

What makes your story unique is the way that you choose to tell it, the colorful characters and conflict you create along with your own writing style. The process you used to create your book will be different than others. The tools you chose to use may be different. The pace at which you write is different as well as the techniques you used to help get your thoughts out.

Do what works for you in terms of process, routine and tools and remember to remain confident about what you are writing. And know that lots of people can tell great stories, but not everyone has the discipline, drive and determination it takes to turn out a book and turn themselves into authors.

#9 Yes, Publish It

Once you have worked hard to get your idea down and into an organized and readable format, find the confidence to allow others to read your story. This can be one of the hardest parts of this process! The idea of unveiling your deepest and most personal writings and opening up an imaginary window into your very soul is scary, and can make even the best of us feel vulnerable and exposed. You have opened up the doors for judgment to come flooding in and to potentially suck every ounce of confidence right out of you. Stay strong and stand your ground. You wouldn't have gone through all of this time and effort if you thought your idea was terrible. And if you are still weary of the idea, create and publish under a pen name.

Now go ahead and publish your book. If you choose to self-publish, put your name on it and make it official, sending it off into the world with a title, copyright, ISBN, dedication, cover art and maybe even a nice photo of your face gracing the back cover, grinning proudly.

Options range from basic and free self-publishing to full-service publishing houses, agents and everything in between to fit your budget and tolerance level.

#10 Keep Writing!

By now, you have the writing bug again and hopefully a healthy interest and the time to keep writing. Don't let this unique talent go to waste now. Find your "why" and remind yourself every day about why you want to be a writer. You have an interest and a talent that is unique to you and you owe it to others to share that.

Most of all, be proud of your accomplishment. You wrote a book! Add this to your resume and LinkedIn profile. Create an author site. Fantasize about quitting your day job. Fantasize about snagging a movie deal. Write a sequel.

*You are an author. You earned this.
Now keep writing!*

For more information on publishing, visit <http://writers-connection.com>
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