

So You Want To Write A Book!



A Presentation by Bob McGough

You can interrupt me to
ask questions.
I look scary, but I'm not.



Who Is Bob?



- Started in 2012 with NaNoWriMo.
- After some mentoring, began to seriously self publish in 2021.
- Author, podcaster, indie game designer, freelancer.
- Collects useless academic degrees.
- Eagle Scout.
- Loves puns.

Why Should You Listen To Bob?

- I've written 12 books.
- Seven have been self-published to moderate success.
- One comes out June of 2024 from Falstaff Dread, an imprint of Falstaff books.



Dragons, Mermaids, Minotaurs, Oh My! panel at Dragon Con 2023. Bob seated beside Sherrilyn Kenyon.

Take Every Suggestion/Rule With A Large Grain Of Salt



What works for most people might not work for you.

If you are a good enough writer, you can break the rules.

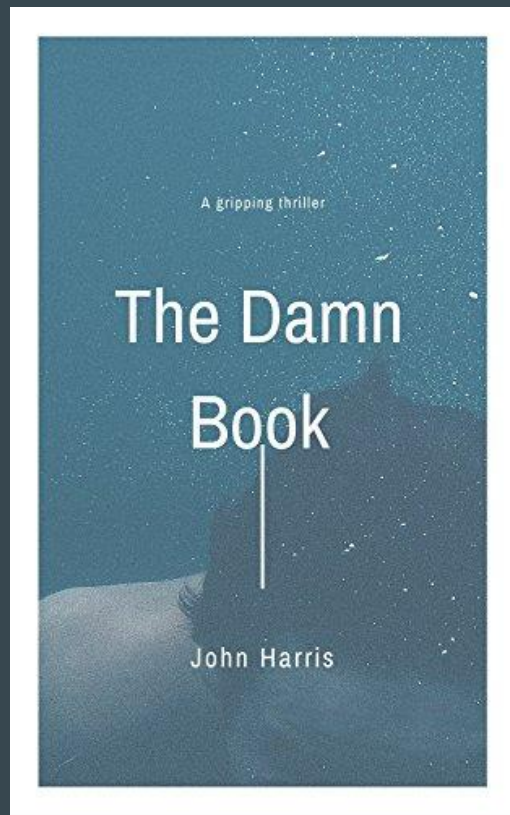
Watch your sodium intake.

Write The Damn Book

Why are you here, and not writing the book?

Less talk, more action.

If this is actually important to you, you will make time, not excuses.



Not this damn book.

Set Small Goals, Give Yourself A Win

Struggling to finish an entire novel? Set smaller goals.

Write a short story. Finish it. Edit it. Celebrate it.

Set a goal of writing one chapter. Finish it. Celebrate it.

Set a goal of writing two chapters. Finish them. Celebrate it.

No one else is going to celebrate your victories. So make sure you do so.

Train Your Brain



Figured out a good time/place that works well for writing? Every time you sit down to write, try the following:

- Light a candle of the same scent.
- Play the same music playlist/album.
- Sit in the same spot at about the same time.

Do this enough, and you will train your brain that when it encounters this time/place/sound/smell it's creative time. The words will flow more easily.

Experiment - Time and Place



Write in the tub. You may get a statue made of you, like Dalton Trumbo.

Struggling to establish a writing rhythm?
Consistency?

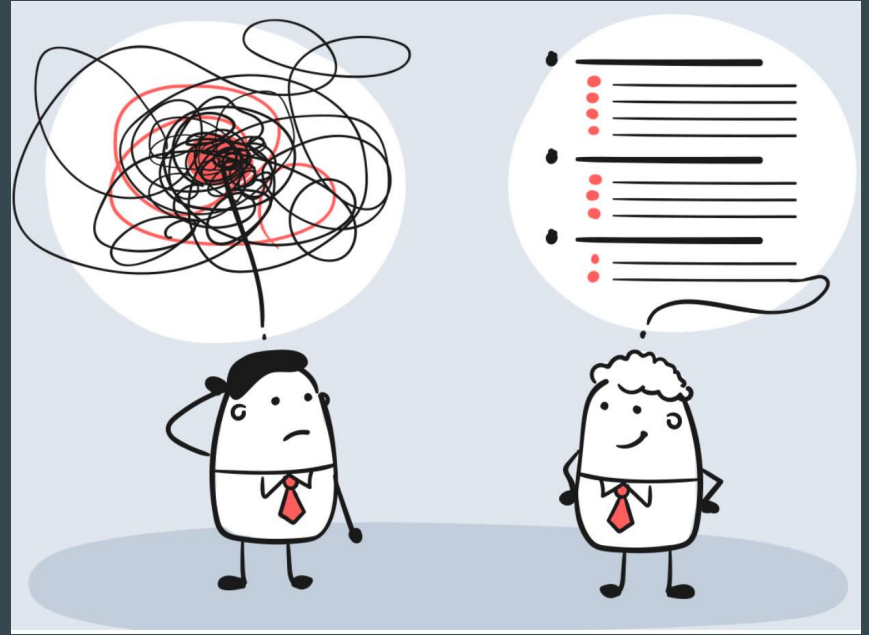
Experiment with place: Write at a desk.
Write on the couch. Write while in bed.
Write at a coffee shop.

Experiment with time: Write before bed.
Write before work. Write on lunch.
Write after the kids are put to bed.

Experiment - Pantser versus Plotter

Chapters not flowing?

Explore the concept of Pantser Writing versus Plotting. Incredibly few people are all one or the other. Play around with it, see what works for you.



Develop A Rhythm

If you write once in a blue moon, every time you try to write, it's going to be a bit of a struggle.

Writing routinely, ideally consecutive days, makes it easier to establish a rhythm.

Once that rhythm is established the words will flow more easily, most days.

Don't Edit As You Go



If I can avoid editing this presentation, you can hold off on editing that chapter.

Don't waste time editing a chapter that might not ever make it into the book.

At most, give the previous page or so a once over as you read it, to get back into the headspace of where you were when you were last writing.

Need to make a big change? Leave yourself a note in red, either in the chapter, or in a notes section at the back of the manuscript.

Writing Groups

Friends and family are great. They are the worst at giving advice however.

Get people who are less invested in protecting your feelings to review your work.

Writing groups are great for this.

Libraries often have them. If they don't start your own.

Ideally find a group that is composed of writers of similar genres. Someone who reads and writes non-fiction is going to most likely not be able to give good advice to someone writing paranormal romance.

Ideas Don't Matter



What emails from
my editor look like.

Ideas don't matter, execution does.
You can fix anything, except a blank page.

Find Your Voice - Write A Lot Of Words

Everyone is bad at writing to begin with.

Want to get better? Write more.

Then, write more. And more.

Take in tips and tricks.

Learn show versus tell.

Write more.



Dialogue tips

Listen to people talking on the phone, where you can only hear one side. Write the half you can't hear as practice.

Read it outloud, and ask yourself does it actually sound like something a real live person would say.

Most people speak in contractions.



There is always Room for improvement.

Show Don't Tell - But All Things In Moderation

Telling

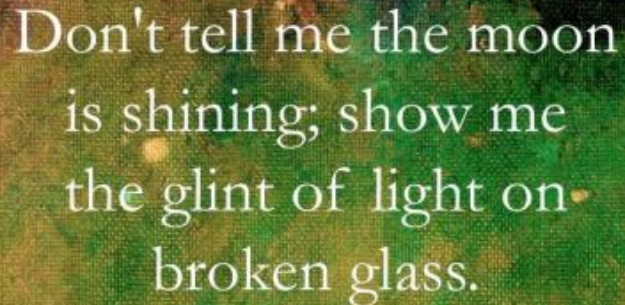
Jim liked the cake.

Jim was angry at Ellen.

Showing

Jim sighed happily after swallowing the first bite of the red velvet cake.

Jim slammed his hands on the desk, his reddening face snarling in the frightened womans direction.



Don't tell me the moon
is shining; show me
the glint of light on
broken glass.

-Anton Chekhov, gun enthusiast

Stop Worrying About What Happens Once The Book Is Done

There is no point in worrying about marketing plans and arc readers if you don't finish the book.

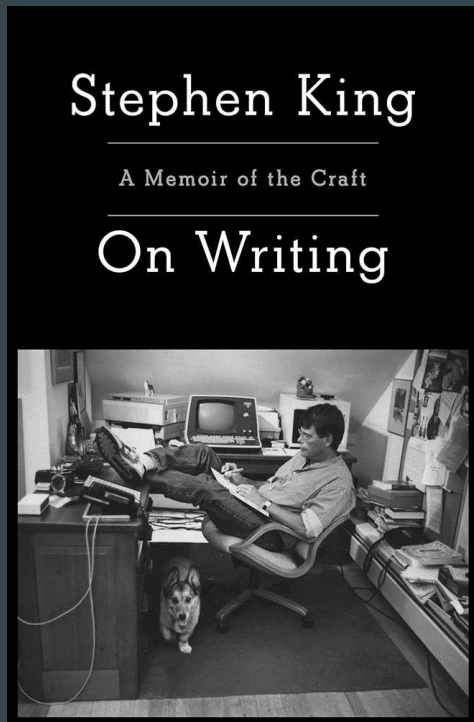
Do not worry about anything except writing the book until you have finished a complete draft one.

With later books, sure. But for now?
Just focus on finishing.

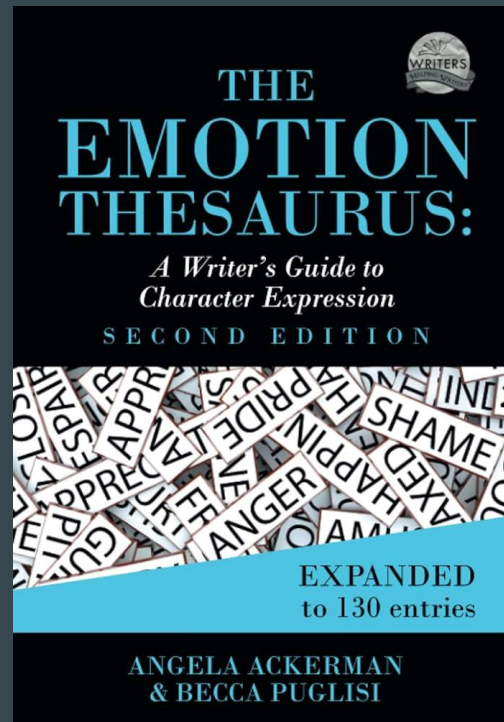


Who knows what the Future holds.

Books I Recommend



Actually interesting.

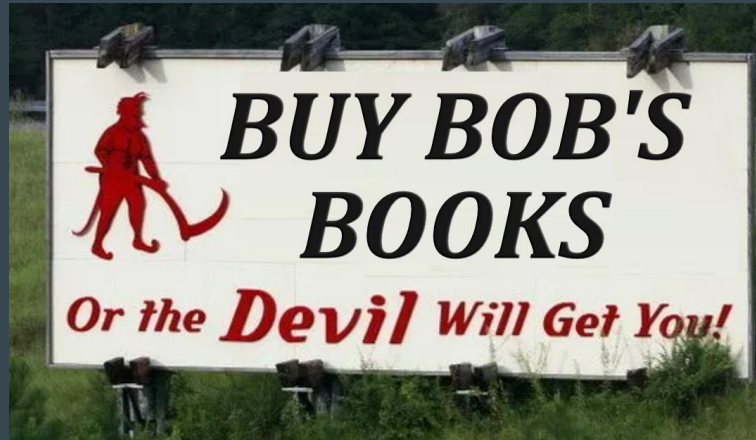


Any in this series.

Jusk Ask

If you take no other advice from this presentation:

Just ask.



Thank You

A copy of this presentation can be found on my website. You can also use the contact form there to ask me any questions about...well pretty much anything really.

www.talesbybob.com