

Introduction

A lot of people think they can write or paint or draw or sing or make movies or what-have-you, but having an artistic temperament doth not make one an artist.

Even the great writers of our time have tried and failed and failed some more. Vladimir Nabokov received a harsh rejection letter from Knopf upon submitting *Lolita*, which would later go on to sell fifty million copies. Sylvia Plath's first rejection letter for *The Bell Jar* read, "There certainly isn't enough genuine talent for us to take notice." Gertrude Stein received a cruel rejection letter that mocked her style. Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* earned him a sprawling rejection letter regarding the reasons he should simply give up writing all together. Tim Burton's first illustrated book, *The Giant Zlig*, got the thumbs down from Walt Disney Productions, and even Jack Kerouac's perennial *On the Road* received a particularly blunt rejection letter that simply read, "I don't dig this one at all." So even if you're an utterly fantastic writer who will be remembered for decades forthcoming, you'll still most likely receive a large dollop of criticism, rejection, and perhaps even mockery before you get there. Having been through it all these great writers offer some writing tips without pulling punches. After all, if a publishing house is going to tear into your manuscript you might as well be prepared.

Source: <https://thoughtcatalog.com/cody-delistraty/2013/09/21-harsh-but-eye-opening-writing-tips-from-great-authors/>

Tips 1-8

1. The first draft of everything is shit. -- *Ernest Hemingway*
2. Never use jargon words like reconceptualize, demassification, attitudinally, judgmentally. They are hallmarks of a pretentious ass. -- *David Ogilvy*
3. If you have any young friends who aspire to become writers, the second greatest favor you can do them is to present them with copies of *The Elements of Style*. The first greatest, of course, is to shoot them now, while they're happy. — *Dorothy Parker*
4. Notice how many of the Olympic athletes effusively thanked their mothers for their success? "She drove me to my practice at four in the morning," etc. Writing is not figure skating or skiing. Your mother will not make you a writer. My advice to any young person who wants to write is: leave home. -- *Paul Theroux*
5. I would advise anyone who aspires to a writing career that before developing his talent he would be wise to develop a thick hide. — *Harper Lee*
6. You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club. -- *Jack London*
7. Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout with some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand. — *George Orwell*
8. There are three rules for writing a novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are. -- *W. Somerset Maugham*

Writing Tips



Tips 9-21

9. If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time — or the tools — to write. Simple as that. — *Stephen King*
10. Remember: when people tell you something's wrong or doesn't work for them, they are almost always right. When they tell you exactly what they think is wrong and how to fix it, they are almost always wrong. — *Neil Gaiman*
11. Imagine that you are dying. If you had a terminal disease would you finish this book? Why not? The thing that annoys this 10-weeks--to-live self is the thing that is wrong with the book. So change it. Stop arguing with yourself. Change it. See? Easy. And no one had to die. — *Anne Enright*
12. If writing seems hard, it's because it is hard. It's one of the hardest things people do. — *William Zinsser*
13. Here is a lesson in creative writing. First rule: Do not use semicolons. They are transvestite hermaphrodites representing absolutely nothing. All they do is show you've been to college. — *Kurt Vonnegut*
14. Prose is architecture, not interior decoration. — *Ernest Hemingway*
15. Write drunk, edit sober. — *Ernest Hemingway*
16. Get through a draft as quickly as possible. Hard to know the shape of the thing until you have a draft. Literally, when I wrote the last page of my first draft of Lincoln's Melancholy I thought, Oh, shit, now I get the shape of this. But I had wasted years, literally years, writing and re-writing the first third to first half. The old writer's rule applies: Have the courage to write badly. — *Joshua Wolf Shenk*
17. Substitute 'damn' every time you're inclined to write 'very;' your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be. — *Mark Twain*
18. Start telling the stories that only you can tell, because there'll always be better writers than you and there'll always be smarter writers than you. There will always be people who are much better at doing this or doing that — but you are the only you. — *Neil Gaiman*

Tips 9-21 (cont)

19. Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative. — *Oscar Wilde*
20. You must stay drunk on writing so reality cannot destroy you. — *Ray Bradbury*
21. Don't take anyone's writing advice too seriously. — *Lev Grossman*



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