

How to Write with Power and Passion



By Michael Alperstein

Writing gives you the opportunity to feel the rush of creative juices flowing, enables you to be heard, to be of service to your readership, and to clear your mind of extraneous thoughts and hone in on what really matters. But even on a good day, writing is challenging. Here are seven ways to help you access more creativity and increase enthusiasm for the writer's journey.

1. Write in Different Mediums.

Although your writing will most likely end up in your word processor, be open to writing at least a percentage of the time in a different medium. Sit in a park and write in a notebook, try speaking into a recorder, or use an old typewriter. Even while using a computer, it is a great idea to stir things up sometimes: Try an unusual font or color, type with your non-dominant hand (some say this fuels creativity because it stimulates your right brain thinking), type super fast, or type very slowly, or experiment with different kinds of music while writing. It is also a good idea to print often and make notes in the margins. This gives you the bigger picture you need for clear and powerful writing.

2. Intertwine Reading with Writing.

If you feel blocked with your writing, go to the bookstore or library and read topics similar to the one you are working on. This is not so much an exercise in ‘comparing’ in order to feel that you can ‘do it better than them.’ The deeper benefit to gain from more reading is to realize the interconnectedness between writing and reading. School teachers often make reading and writing sound as if they are two totally different activities, but they are intrinsically connected. When you read, you open up and make space for new ideas to come into your mind. Writing is fundamentally no different.

One way to see the connection between the two is to practice active reading. Active reading is reading the text as text, not being fully absorbed in its meaning, and instead having a small amount of attention on learning new techniques and styles.

Use the connection between reading and writing to your advantage by dancing between them until you can sense their relationship. This short circuits writer’s block faster than anything I know.

3. Focus on Solutions.

Remember to bring your attention back to the solutions to the "problems" you see with your writing. Powerful writing is about turning attention inward to find new ideas amongst a field of infinite ideas. There is great benefit to re-focusing your attention in a surprising and positive new direction. This is done by putting attention on your inner data bank of writing tips: Show don’t tell, say more with less, keep the tension high for your main character, highlight the benefits to your reader, and so forth.

The primary consideration for editing your work should be: "What can I add or delete that will create a stronger next draft?" This question takes you out of self-judgment and into a solution mind frame.

4. Use Emotions to Fuel Creativity

Be it calmness, fear, or passion, any emotion can stir the creative pot and help you be a better writer. Realize there is a connection between your emotions and your future readers. Consider this: *The quality of your emotional state while writing will impact the quality of the emotional state of*

your future readers. When your writing is flowing, direct your attention inward on the feeling of the creative flow and the emotions along with it. Bask in the flow. All your emotions will help.

For example, if you are writing a piece you hope will uplift readers, be as conscious and calm as possible while writing. See if you can tap into the feeling you want your readers to feel. Breathe. Stretch every now and then. The clearer and more at peace you are while you write, the clearer and more at peace your readers will feel down the line.

Similarly, if you are writing a thriller, do all you can to get your adrenaline rushing while you write. You might do some push ups, play loud music or write in candle light. Notice your body and posture. If you want future readers to be afraid, you might purposely breathe shallowly for a while or literally sit on the edge of your seat. Your body posture is important. It helps you transmute whatever you are feeling into creative inspiration.

5. Give Help to Another Writer.

Helping someone else is a great way to help yourself. There is an art to giving useful feedback. Here are some tips:

a. Help the other writer brainstorm new options. Suggest a different metaphor, another example, a new direction, or another word. Endeavor to open doors.

b. Ask questions: What is the significance of this paragraph? Could you explain this idea better? Who is your target audience? How do you want your audience to react to this?

c. Again, focus on solutions not on problems or personal reactions. For instance, if you are critiquing someone's crime thriller and you start to lose interest, say "How about more danger here?" instead of just saying "I got bored."

No matter what it is you do not like about the writing, know there is always a fix.

d. Keep it real. Express the negative in a way that encourages the writer to improve.

Distinguish your reaction from the writing itself. See your opinions *as* opinions, not external facts.

6. Get Help from Another Writer.

Hiring a writing coach or getting feedback from other writers will improve your writing better than anything I know. Or start or join a writing group. But you still need to stay true to yourself and write what is in your heart. There is an art to benefiting from other people's feedback. Here is what I suggest:

a. Ask for the specific help you want. Do you want the other person to help you with character development? Organization? Grammar? Or perhaps you are 'wide open' to all input, which is fine, but it's good to say this out in the open.

b. The sting! How do you handle it if the feedback you receive is negative? You dig deeper and rewrite! When someone points something out about your writing that you couldn't see, it is a gift to you no matter how much it may sting at first. But you still need to stay true to your own message. Maybe you keep your writing the way it is and calmly reject the feedback. Be grateful to the other person for reassuring you that you are already on the right track with your writing. You know what you want to say. Stay true to your craft.

7. Put Your Writing Out There.

Be willing to say goodbye to perfectionism and share your writing with others. Share it for the joy of being seen or the joy of being of service to others. It's not easy to go public, but it can get easier. One way I have found to make it easier is to reflect upon the following idea: *To share writing with a small number of people is not fundamentally different than sharing it with a large number of people.* For example, suppose I share a writing piece with three other people: One person dislikes it;

one thinks it's okay; and one loves it. The feelings I experience when I hear their responses can be just as intense as if I shared my writing with thousands of people! Suppose ten thousand people disliked it, ten thousand thought it was okay, and ten thousand loved it. I am not necessarily going to feel different than I did with three people.

Explore this yourself. Above all, trust your own perceptions and instincts as you go public with your writing and you will successfully navigate outer opinions.

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