

# Writing Is Easy!



Writing is one of the most easy, pain-free, and happy ways to pass the time in all the arts. For example, right now I am sitting in my rose garden and typing on my new computer. Each rose represents a story, so I'm never at a loss for *what* to write. I just look deep into the heart of the rose and read its story and write it down through *typing*, which I enjoy anyway. I could be typing "kjfiu joewmv jiw" and would enjoy it as much as typing words that actually make sense. I simply relish the movement of my fingers on the keys. Sometimes, it is true, agony visits the head of a writer. At these moments, I stop writing and relax with a coffee at my favorite restaurant, knowing that words can be changed, rethought, fiddled with, and, of course, ultimately denied. Painters don't have that luxury. If they go to a coffee shop, their paint dries into a hard mass.

Location, Location, Location

I would recommend to writers that they live in California, because here they can look up at the blue sky in between those moments of looking into the heart of a rose. I feel sorry for writers—and there are some pretty famous ones—who live in places like South America and Czechoslovakia, where I imagine it gets pretty dreary. These writers are easy to spot. Their books are often depressing and filled with disease and negativity. If you're going to write about disease, I would suggest that California is the place to do it. Dwarfism is never funny, but look at the result when it was dealt with out here in California. Seven happy dwarfs. Can you imagine seven dwarfs in Czechoslovakia? You would get seven melancholic dwarfs at best, seven melancholic dwarfs with no handicapped-parking spaces.

*Love in the Time of Cholera*: why it's a bad title

I admit that "Love in the time of . . ." is a great title, so far. You're reading along, you're happy, it's about love, I like the way the word *time* comes in there, something nice in the association of *love* and *time*, like a new word almost, *lovetime*: nice, nice feeling. Suddenly, the morbid *Cholera* appears. I was happy till then. "Love in the Time of the Oozing Sores and Pustules" is probably an earlier, rejected title of this book, written in a rat-infested tree house on an old Smith-Corona. This writer, whoever he is, could have used a couple of weeks in Pacific Daylight Time.

I did a little experiment. I decided to take the following disheartening passage, which was no doubt written in some depressing place, and attempt to rewrite it under the influence of California:

Most people deceive themselves with a pair of faiths: they believe in *eternal memory* (of people, things, deeds, nations) and in *redressibility* (of deeds, mistakes, sins, wrongs). Both are false faiths. In reality the opposite is true: everything will be forgotten and nothing will be redressed. (Milan Kundera)

Sitting in my garden, as the bees glide from flower to flower, I let the above paragraph filter through my mind. The following new paragraph emerged:

I feel pretty,  
Oh so pretty,  
I feel pretty and witty and bright.

Kundera was just too wordy. Sometimes the delete key is your greatest friend.

### Writer's Block: A Myth

Writer's block is a fancy term made up by whiners so they can have an excuse to drink alcohol. Sure a writer can get stuck for a while, but when that happens to real authors, they



simply go out and get an "as told to." The alternative is to hire yourself out as an "as heard from," thus taking all the credit. It is also much easier to write when you have someone to "bounce" with. This is someone to sit in a room with and exchange ideas. It is good if the last name of the person you choose to bounce with is Salinger. I know a certain early-twentieth-century French writer, whose initials were M.P., who could have used a good bounce person. If he had, his title might have been the more correct "Remembering Past Things" instead of the clumsy one he used. The other trick I use when I have a momentary stoppage is virtually foolproof, and I'm happy to pass it along. Go to an already published novel and find a sentence you absolutely adore. Copy it down in your manuscript. Usually that sentence will lead you naturally to another sentence; pretty soon your own ideas will start to flow. If they don't, copy down the next sentence. You can safely use up to three sentences of someone else's work—unless they're friends; then you can use two. The odds of being found out are very slim, and even if you are, there's no jail time.

### Creating Memorable Characters

Nothing will make your writing soar more than a memorable character. If there is a memorable character, the reader will keep going back to the book, picking it up, turning it over in his hands, hefting it, and tossing it into the air. Here is an example of the jazzy uplift that vivid characters can offer:

Some guys were standing around when in came this guy.

You are now on your way to creating a memorable character. You have set him up as being a guy, and with that come all the reader's ideas of what a guy is. Soon you will liven your character by using an adjective:

But this guy was no ordinary guy, he was a red guy.

This character, the red guy, has now popped into the reader's imagination. He is a full-blown person, with hopes and dreams, just like the reader. Especially if the reader is a red guy. Now you might want to give the character a trait. You can inform the reader of the character trait in one of two ways. First, simply say what that trait is—for example, "but this red guy was different from most red guys, this red guy liked frappés." The other is rooted in action—have the red guy walk up to a bar and order a frappé, as in:

"What'll you have, red guy?"

"I'll have a frappé."

Once you have mastered these two concepts, vivid character writing combined with adjectives, you are on your way to becoming the next Shakespeare's brother. And don't forget to copyright any ideas you have that might be original. You don't want to be caught standing by helplessly while



your familiar "red guy" steps up to a bar in a frappé commercial.

### Writing Dialogue

Many very fine writers are intimidated when they have to write the way people really talk. Actually it's quite easy. Simply lower your IQ by fifty and start typing!

### Subject Matter

Because topics are in such short supply, I have provided a few for writers who may be suffering in the darker climes. File some of these away, and look through them during the suicidal winter months:

"Naked Belligerent Panties": This is a good sexy title with a lot of promise.

How about a diet book that suggests your free radicals *don't* enter ketosis unless your insulin levels have been carbo-charged?

Something about how waves at the beach just keep coming and coming and how amazing it is (I smell a best-seller here).

"Visions of Melancholy from a Fast-Moving Train": Some foreign writer is right now rushing to his keyboard, ready to pound on it like Horowitz. However, this title is a phony string of words with no meaning and would send your poor book to the "Artsy" section of Barnes and Noble,

where—guess what—it would languish, be remaindered, and die.

### A Word to Avoid

“Dagnabbit” will never get you anywhere with the Booker Prize people. Lose it.

### Getting Published

I have two observations about publishers:

1. Nowadays, they can be either male or female.
2. They love to be referred to by the appropriate pronoun. If your publisher is male, refer to him as “he.” If your publisher is female, “she” is considered more correct. Once you have established a rapport, “Babe” is also acceptable for either sex.

Once you have determined your pronoun usage, you are ready to “schmooze” your publisher. Let’s say your favorite author is Dante. Call Dante’s publisher and say you’d like to invite them both to lunch. If the assistant says something like “But Dante’s dead,” be sympathetic and say, “Please accept my condolences.” Once at lunch, remember never to be moody. Publishers like up, happy writers, although it’s impressive to suddenly sweep your arm slowly across the lunch



table, dumping all the plates and food onto the floor, while shouting "Sic Semper Tyrannis!"

### A Demonstration of Actual Writing

It's easy to talk about writing and even easier to do it. Watch:

Call me Ishmael. It was cold, very cold, here in the mountain town of Kilimanjaroville.© I could hear a bell. It was tolling. I knew exactly for who it was tolling, too. It was tolling for me, Ishmael Twist,© a red guy who likes frappé. [Author's note: I am now stuck. I walk over to a rose and look into its heart.] That's right, Ishmael Twist.®

Finally, I can't overstress the importance of having a powerful closing sentence.