

Welcome to the fourth installment of "Becoming a Better Writer" An investigation into the art of creativity - in ten easy lessons!

A special thanks to everyone who sent me feedback about the last lesson. One particular comment I made (about writing at work) proved to be very controversial. I apologize to anyone who was offended - that was not my intention.

Recently, I've also received emails from subscribers suggesting I run an online forum for discussions arising from these lessons. Well, I've set one up at Yahoo Groups. Go here to join:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/easywaytowrite/>

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"Turn your urge to write into a magnificent obsession"
Go to: <http://www.easywaytowrite.com>

I look forward to working with you.

Lesson Four

"Murder your darlings" is a phrase coined by F Scott Fitzgerald. He was referring to what you might call your "best bits." He believed that these are the very "bits" you should always edit out of your work.

As Elmore Leonard once said, "If I come across anything in my work that smacks of 'good writing,' I immediately strike it out."

The theory is that writing you're particularly proud of is probably self-indulgent and will stand out. You might think this is good. Wrong.

You will most likely break the "fictive dream." (This is the state of consciousness reached by readers who are absorbed by a writer. We will be looking at it closely next lesson.) And breaking your reader out of this fictive dream is a heinous sin!

Editing out "the best bits" is the hardest thing a novice writer has to do - after all, isn't it counterproductive to write good things down only to cut them out?

No, it's all good training...

When you start out, every word you write is precious.

The words are torn from you. You wrestle with them, forcing them to express what you're trying to say.

When you're done, you may have only a paragraph or a few pages - but to you the writing shines with inner radiance and significance.

That's why criticism cuts to the core. You can't stand the idea of changing a single word in case the sense you're trying to convey gets lost or distorted.

Worse still, you have moments of doubt when you think you're a bad writer - criticism will do this every time. Sometimes you might go for months, blocked and worrying over your words and your ability.

There is only one cure for this - to write more; to get words out of your head and on to the page. When you do that, you're ahead, no matter how bad you think you are.

After all, words are just the tools - a collection of words is not the end result, it is only the medium through which you work. In the same way that a builder uses bricks and wood to build a house - the end result is not about the materials, it's about creating a place to live.

As you progress in your writing career, you become less touchy about your words. You have to. Editors hack them around without mercy. Agents get you to rewrite great swathes of text they don't like. Publishers cut out whole sections as irrelevant. All this hurts - a lot.

But after a while, you realize you're being helped. That it's not the words that matter so much as what you're trying to communicate.

A best selling author I know said he didn't feel he was a REAL writer until he'd written over a million words.

The guy's famous now - and rich - and still in his thirties.

Before that, he spent eight years writing hundreds of short stories and numerous novels because he was convinced that good, sellable writing is not an Art - but a craft.

He's right, of course. It's a simple lesson.

The more you write, the better you get.

Once you accept that none of the words actually matter, and have the courage to "murder your darlings," you have the makings of the correct

professional attitude to ensure your writing career.

This is a tough lesson to learn.

That's why I believe my "Easy Way to Write" system is the best way forward. It teaches you how to clear the decks, achieve a good author's mindset and gets you writing fast and well right from the start.

The truth is, if you want to be a best selling author, you must write - fast and often. Just an hour a day writing 1000 to 5000 words is much better than one afternoon in three weeks spent trying to write a whole chapter.

Good writing thrives on regularity and repetition.

Okay, it's not just about quantity. It's also about learning the techniques and rules of good storytelling.

(That's covered in the book too!)
<http://easywaytowrite.com/novel.html>

But it's really only when you have a lot of writing behind you that you fully understand what you want to say and how best you can say it.

As always, the trick is...to write!

@robparnell 2004

This is the fourth of ten short lessons on "Becoming a Better Writer." They arrive weekly. You may unsubscribe at any time - but of course, I'd much prefer if you didn't!

Also, you may like to forward this email to writers and colleagues who might find it interesting, fun and educational. No problem but - no editing please!

Best regards and keep writing.

Don't forget, you can contact me for advice, information and indeed, for any reason at rob@easywaytowrite.com

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Make Lots of Money Writing - The Easy Way!
<http://www.howtobeaninternetguru.com>
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PPS: Next time, we'll be looking at the "fictive dream" and the sacred pact you make with your reader.

Till then, keep well and happy.

Ciao

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