

**BUTTE COPPER QUILLS AND THE NATIONAL
NOVEL WRITING MONTH PRESENT:**

**HOW TO WRITE A NOVEL IN
30 ACTION-PACKED,
FULL-FILLED, AMAZINGLY
CREATIVE DAYS --- READY?**

SET??

GO!

Creative Writing 101 for the NANO Participant

Creative writing is any form of writing which is written with the creativity of mind: fiction writing, poetry writing, creative nonfiction writing and more. The purpose is to express something, whether it be feelings, thoughts, or emotions.

Rather than simply giving information or inciting the reader to make an action beneficial to the writer, creative writing is written to entertain or educate someone, to spread awareness about something or someone, or to simply express one's thoughts.

But there are two kinds of creative writing: good and bad. Bad creative writing cannot make any impression on the reader. You don't want to do that, do you? Of course not; so whether you're a novelist, a poet, a short-story writer, an essayist, a biographer or just an aspiring beginner, you'll want to perfect your craft. But the question is: how?

When you write great fiction, poetry, or nonfiction, amazing things can happen. Readers can't put it down. The work you wrote becomes a bestseller. It becomes famous. But you have to reach to that level... *first*.

The best way to increase your proficiency in creative writing is to write, write compulsively, but it doesn't just mean write whatever you want. There are certain things you should know first... it helps to start with the right foot. One of the best ways to START writing is with the National Novel Writers Month Challenge. Held each November, more than 300,000 people set out to write a 50,000 word novel (or novel start) in a mere 30 days. Sounds intimidating, doesn't it. So let's break it down. Can you write 1667 words a day – or to put it simpler, how about 10 to 12 paragraphs a day. That doesn't sound so bad, does it? Well, it really isn't AND you have a support group to help you complete the challenge called the Butte Copper Quills.

This handout of writing information, calendars, and other support material help you meet the NANO Challenge and take your story forward. Included are several items and ideas for you to read and consider at your leisure. Writing is an independent hobby but the group support provides a place to brainstorm, receive encouragement, share your victories, and mostly a place to go to be creative (writing at home a midst doing laundry and cleaning seems to suck the creativity right outta ya!).

So here you have it, a beginners' guide:

- The first page is the event calendar. You do NOT have to attend all or even ANY of the events to participate, they are here for you if you want them. Everything we do we also share online via the NANOWRIMO.ORG site / Montana Forums / Butte and Surrounding Areas Thread. You will want to check in to that and watch it frequently so you know what is coming up.

- The second page is the INNER EDITOR CONTAINMENT BUTTON. We all have an inner editor and we have to find a way to shut it off for the month of November. Editing is the logical part of your brain and writing is the creative part of your brain. VERY FEW people can do both simultaneously and do either well. For November, don't edit – not even a little – just write and see where it takes you. You can edit in December!
- The third page is the NANO Tracker. It will show you where you should be to be on target. With that said, don't freak out if you fall behind – we all do – then we have to have a couple good days to catch up. Sometimes stories hit a lull and you have to let it meld in your head for a day to see where it is going to go.
- Then there is A BIG handout which contains:
 - An Introduction to Creative Writing
 - How to Get Started in Creative Writing in Just Three Steps
 - Fiction Writing 101: The Elements of Stories
 - What Should Be Told and Shown in the Opening Chapter?
 - Why Hunting for Plots is Worthless
 - Conflict IS Necessary to Make it Spicy
 - Writing Tip: Finding the Balance of Narrative and Dialogue
 - Creative Non-Fiction: What is it?
 - Tips and Tricks to Improve Your Creative Writing
 - Editing and Proofreading – READ THIS IN DECEMBER
 - No Method? No Problem!
 - Common Mistakes Made by Creative Writers
 - Top Ten Tips to Fight and Defeat Writer's Block
 - The Importance of Word Count
 - Writing Tip: Use Vivid Description
 - POV: What is it and How it Matters
 - The Need to Say More with Less – Concise Writing
 - 7 Questions to Consider When Writing Final thoughts

Just so you know, the Butte Nano Writers have been established for 5 years and in the first year we had 6 participants, 3 of them finished the challenge with more than 50,000 words. The second year we had 8 participants and 4 of them finished the challenge with more than 50,000 words. In 2013, we had 16 participants (1 was part of the Young Writers Program) and 9 participants plus our young writer completed the challenge as winners. 2014, we had 26 people sign up with 13 participants crossing the finishing line. Last year, we had 22 participants with 14 completing the

challenge and wrote 816,102 words during the month. That's a 64% completion rate which put our region in the top 50 regions internationally for the year. So it is completely achievable even with school, homework, housework, a full time job, teaching, homeschooling, family and holidays. The only thing holding you back is you!

Prepare for a writing adventure! If you are a planner, outline, storyboard, work up your characters, write the back stories, and get into the frame of mind where you need to be to write a best-seller. If you are a pantsier (as in writing by the seat of your pants) sit back and watch the planners drive themselves nuts in the weeks before the challenge starts. There is no right way to write – whatever works for you is correct.

Mostly have fun, build some friendships, challenge yourself, and be surprised at the end of November at what you have created. Remember, the World Needs Your Story!

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NANO Butte - The Home of the Copper Quills

NATIONAL NOVEL WRITERS MONTH 2016

HERE IS A ONE PAGE REFERENCE TOOL FOR EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NANO 2016.
 Questions? Call / text Debi at 406-366-4348 (prefers text) or Jean 406-479-3438 (prefers text). Our GOAL is for you to WIN!

NANOWRIMO 2016	50,000 WORD CHALLENGE
LOCAL SPONSOR-	BUTTE COPPER QUILLS

EVENT SCHEDULE	STARTING	ENDING	MEETING SITES	STARTING	ENDING
PREPARING FOR NANO- OCTOBER (WEDNESDAY MEETINGS)	10.19.2016	10.29.2016	SUNDAY - HAMPTON INN B'FAST ROOM 2-5PM	11.6.2016	11.27.2016
KICKOFF WEEK	10.30.2016	11.5.2016			
MOVING FORWARD WEEK	11.6.2016	11.12.2016	WEDNESDAY- CLARK CHATEAU- 6:15 - 9:15 PM	11.2.2016	11.30.2016
HITTING THE WALL WEEK	11.13.2016	11.19.2016			
THE FINAL PUSH WEEK (+)	11.20.2016	11.30.2016			
THANK GOD IT'S OVER	12.4.2016	12.4.2016	FRIDAY - REMOTES - BUTTE NANO FORUM - ONLINE 7:00 - 8:30 *** WORD WAR 1 9:00 - 10:30 *** WORD WAR 2	11.4.2016	11.25.2016
SPECIAL EVENTS					
KICKOFF PARTY METALS BAR & GRILL 5:00 - 10:00 PM	11.1.2016	11.1.2016			
THE AFTERNOON OF SCRIBBLING FURIOUSLY- METALS BAR & GRILL 12:00 - 5:00 PM	11.20.2016	11.20.2016			

[LINKS TO REMEMBER - THIS IS HOW WE COMMUNICATE WITH YOU](#)

[REMOTELY DURING NANO](#)

www.facebook.com/ButteNano

<http://nanowrimo.org/regions/usa-montana-butte>

(NANO PREP Meetings in October will work on Story Mapping, developing characters and back stories, the elevator pitch, the back cover blurb, handouts, prizes, incentives and everything you need to be ready for NANO 2016.)

Inner Editor Containment Button

Before you begin your month-long noveling adventure, you'll want to do away with your Inner Editor. What is your Inner Editor? He's the nagging, no-fun beast we bring along with us on all our creative endeavors. He sits on our shoulder and points out our typos and misspellings and every awkward sentence. When he's in a particularly nasty mood, he might try to tell us that we're embarrassingly awful writers, and shouldn't even be allowed to put pen to paper. He is helpful to have around when taking tests and revising things we've already written, but he'll slow you down in the worst way if you let him write your novel with you next month.

No matter how ridiculous this might sound, close your eyes and imagine your Inner Editor. Think about what he or she might look like. Is your Inner Editor a man or a woman? Is he or she holding a dictionary? Chasing after you with a ruler? Once you get a good picture in your head of what he or she looks like, open your eyes and push the button below.

Warning: Pushing the button will vacuum your Inner Editor right out of your head for the next 30 days. He'll be transported from your brain into an Inner Editor Containment Cell, where we'll put him to use proofreading the NaNoWriMo websites. We have lots for him to do! And we promise that after 30 days we'll give him back to you (so you'll have him around to help out with your novel rewrites). Congratulations. Your Inner Editor has been successfully contained.



Congratulations. Your Inner Editor has been successfully contained. It's time to move on.

The Tracker

DAY #	What you should have	What you actually have
November 1	1,700	
November 2	3,400	
November 3	5,100 ** N **	
November 4	6,800	
November 5	8,500	
November 6	10,200 ** A **	
November 7	11,900	
November 8	13,600	
November 9	15,300 ** N **	
November 10	17,000	
November 11	18,700	
November 12	20,400 ** O **	
November 13	22,100	
November 14	23,800	
November 15	25,500 ** W **	
November 16	27,200	
November 17	28,900	
November 18	30,600 ** R **	
November 19	32,300	
November 20	34,000	
November 21	35,700 ** I **	
November 22	37,400	
November 23	39,100	

November 24	40,800 ** M **	
November 25	42,500	
November 26	44,200	
November 27	45,900 ** O **	
November 28	47,600	
November 29	49,300	
November 30	51,000 ***WINNER*** ** STAR **	

Dates that are in **BOLD** print are dates where you can VALIDATE your Novel. **YOU MUST VALIDATE BEFORE MIDNIGHT YOUR TIME ZONE ON THE NANO SITE TO WIN. VALIDATION CAN TAKE UP TO 40 MINUTES.**

THE HALO CLUB :

National Novel Writing Month is a FREE event - ANYONE can access the site and participate. However, there are certain expenses that go with maintaining the hardware for the servers and the software so that 300,000+ people across the globe can all participate in the challenge. You'll see several people have a golden HALO across the top corner of their profile picture -- that means that they have made a financial contribution to the Office of Letters and Light (the 501 C 3 Non-profit) that runs NANOWRIMO.

Please consider making a contribution -- \$25 a year if you can swing it, helps keep this adventure alive and thriving... Ask your MLs how to go about making a donation if you are financially able.

An Introduction to Creative Writing

What is creative writing? Is there a correct definition anywhere? That is what I hoped to find when I Googled the term “creative writing” a while back. But the answers were disappointing for me as a pure beginner, and puzzling. Here’s what is written as a definition for creative writing in Wikipedia:

“Creative writing is considered to be any writing, fiction, poetry, or nonfiction, which goes outside the bounds of normal professional, journalistic, academic, and technical forms of literature. Works which fall into this category include novels, epics, short stories, and poems. Writing for the screen and stage, screenwriting and playwriting respectively, typically have their own programs of study, but fit under the creative writing category as well.

Yeah well... take that for *creative* writing... But it’s clear that even Wikipedia does not give a clear definition but only says that it is considered any writing which is outside the bounds.

The Work Which You Can Recognize as Creative Writing

As said before, fiction, poetry and nonfiction are the examples of creative writing. They are examples because they are obviously creative and not necessarily true (with the exception of non-fiction). Fiction is written to entertain and educate. We love reading stories. Although there are some true stories, most stories are nothing but fiction.

The above examples are obviously creative writing. But now we come to more subjective material. Ever heard of an autobiography or a biography? I’m sure you have. Then there is its distant cousin the memoir. Famous people make millions by publishing memoirs, and some of them are popular reading material. Famous personalities also write autobiographies or pay someone to write their biography. This is also constituted under creative writing.

The fact is that these types of writing are not written to entertain but to educate (in some cases) and to inform (in most cases). In bookstores, biographies and autobiographies are sold along with stories. And so that is what constitutes creative writing in a nutshell. Now let’s look at the work which you can recognize as not creative writing, and to use its technical term, technical writing.

The Work Which You Can Recognize as Other Professional Forms of Writing

Most of the writing written in the world falls under this category, technical writing (Advertisements, Web copy, Copywriting, Product descriptions, Textbooks, Reference material such as encyclopedias, Letters, etc.).

Words which appear everywhere, on your TV screen, on the computer and on the paper are all technical writing. Technical writing is in some ways easier to write than creative writing. But it too is governed by rules, and has its own do's and don'ts.

Writers which compose the material of books are called authors regardless of the content and style of the material. This is one area where creative writing and technical writing share a similarity.

It goes without saying that technical writing is not written to entertain therefore I find it rather boring to read and so do other people. Surely you've read the Terms & Conditions of some website. How boring it is to read? Though you see words that make sense, you are not moved by them. Whereas in creative writing... if it's really good... you can't put it down.

Creative Writing Means What You Believe It Means

Is creative writing an art or a craft? Of course, the debate will never finish. But I do believe that it is both. Forget about definitions. Use your own creativity and find your very own meaning of creative writing. Somebody said that writers have a gift; especially creative writers. Creative writers have the power to entertain someone, to make someone laugh, to make someone cry - to make someone *think*.

And so we see that creative writing does not deserve a clear definition, but attention and a special meaning. I love creative writing. I love reading it and I love writing it. Are you like me? If you are, then what are you waiting for? Open that word processor, and start typing. You never know, you might find a hidden masterpiece.

How to Get Started in Creative Writing in Just Three Steps

You've gone to the next step: you now know what creative writing is. You'd like to get started in it. The inevitable question is... how?

1. Know the Genres and Subgenres of Creative Writing

It might not seem important now, but if you know the genres and subgenres of creative writing, you've done yourself a great service. Why? Because many great authors *specialize* in one big broad genre, such as fiction, or poetry, or nonfiction, and never delve further. That is why... you see that great novelists write only novels, great short-story writers write only short stories, great poets only write poetry and so on. You don't want to become "Jack of all trades; master of none." And you can only specialize by knowing all of them.

Note: Now, of course, there are exceptions. Some novelists do write short stories and vice versa. But these types of authors are not common; they are rare. That's not to say that you shouldn't step outside of your broad genre and be afraid to experiment with other ones, it's just to say that you should, first and foremost, go with the one you like most.

So do yourself a favor and read on the creative writing genres. They're all known, of course. Fiction is branched into four sub-genres: novels, novelettes, novellas and short-stories.

If you want to dig under the surface, you will find more and more sub-genres. Stories under 1000 words are called micro-fiction. Recently a new type of sub-genre has come into light: Twitter fiction, fiction of 140 characters. The people who make such fiction must be talented, because I can't seem to close up a story under 1000 words. Concise writing, of course, is the issue.

Creative Non-fiction. It's strange that nonfiction is a part of creative writing, but then, as goes a saying, the truth is sometimes better than fiction. Memoirs, autobiographies, biographies, essays and journals, etc. are all part of non-fiction.

2. Pick Out Your Own Genre

This is sometimes easy work, and sometimes hard work. There are so many and they each possess their own rules and guidelines (self-imposed censorship if you will). Some of the easiest to spot are Romance, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Young Adult, Horror, Mystery, Westerns, Children's Fiction, and Contemporary Fiction. New genres are being added all the time like

New Adult and Paranormal. Do the research and know the guidelines to write in your chosen genre.

3. Start Writing (Regularly)

Some writers believe that it doesn't matter whether you write once a day or a week or a month or anything else. Your writing should not be set on a schedule in which you can't match your other work. "Write Every Day" is outdated advice now... the newer and better advice is "Write Regularly as much as you can inside your genre."

However, I disagree. If you want to get anywhere in your writing and if you really want to finish the novel inside of you, you need to write everyday if at all possible. Yes, life does interfere, but the more often you sit down to write, the likely it is that the creative juices will start flowing and you will create some really amazing fiction. Writing, like any other craft, takes practice and consistency to be great at it. If you continue the practice... you should start seeing results. Never break off from your work. I tried it one time and the results were not uplifting. It took me a whole month to get back to my earlier standard and make the work sound fluid. Additionally, if you want to complete the NANO challenge, you need to be getting words on paper(computer) at a rate of about 1700 words a day – now don't panic, that is really only about 3 pages of manuscript or about 14 paragraphs. You got this covered!

Bottom line is: just write (regularly), and you're started in creative writing! You can say with pride, "I'm a writer." Just write. That's it.

But what's the purpose?

If your purpose is to get published and make money from your writing straight away, I'm sorry to say that you will be bitterly disappointed. Even the best authors' first novels were proper garbage (not my words; their words) unless they were edited previously. So you might as well give up creative writing if you only want the money.

But if your purpose is to enjoy your ride and perfect the writing, just be pleased by writing, then you are welcome inside the camp of writers. You're a writer. So you might just as well do—do what?—write.

Fiction Writing 101: The Elements of Stories

Which is one of the most popular forms of creative writing?

You guessed it: fiction writing in all of its myriad of genres. Novels are written every month and every year. The vast majority don't see the light of day (a fancy expression meaning getting published). Some do. Some become best-sellers. Some don't even sell a few copies.

Why? What makes the difference between writing a really good story that people read with pleasure and a boring one that makes readers throw it across the room?

Now, there are a few fiction writing elements which you should know. This isn't one of those "you can't live without" lists. You can live without this one. But you wouldn't want to. Once you know all the elements, you only have to perfect them and there you have it, a masterpiece in your hands...

Only there's nothing "only" about perfecting elements. Below are the fiction writing elements found in all the novels, novelettes, novellas and short stories:

1. Character

Every story has a main character. If you don't have any characters, you don't have any story. You might have the most exciting plot in the history of the universe, but if you don't have characters that make the reader care about them, you might just as well throw out your story.

No believable character = no story. ~ James Chartrand

There is a whole art to character writing. Sure, you can slap up a name on a caricature, give it a few clichés (qualities so well known that there's nothing caring about them) and call it a character. But that doesn't make it a believable and real character... and I'm not talking just about cardboard cut-outs here. Unbelievable characters are... well there's no strong enough word in English to describe them. Pretty well nonsense. Don't waste your ink making them up.

2. Plot

Every story has a main character. But does every story have a plot? The answer is not every story... but all the good ones have them. If a story does not have a plot, you can conclude it's a bad story, not publishable at all, because there's nothing happening within it.

The question you can ask to yourself to determine if your story has a plot or not is: *what happens in it?*

Action is not plot. Plot is something different. Whether you want to write a detailed plot outline or just start your story, you must take care of plot. Without characters there is no story even if you have plot, and vice versa. Without plot there is no story even if you have the best characters in the world. Both are necessary. Omission of either one can seriously hinder your story.

Your plot can be anything in the world. It can be happy, it can be sad, it can be serious, it can be funny, it can be realistic and it can be fantastical. Its only function is to draw the reader in. If you write a plot that makes your readers bored, then you can conclude that it was a failure. Many plots are failures. Far more are failures than successes. It can be bitter to realize that your plot is not holding the reader's attention, but it happens to all of us and it is the way of the world.

a. Subplots

If you include subplots in your story, you can increase interest in your novel. But that's only if you carry it off well. What are subplots? From Wikipedia: *A subplot is a secondary plot strand that is a supporting side story for any story or the main plot. Subplots may connect to main plots, in either time or place or in thematic significance. Subplots often involve supporting characters, those besides the protagonist or antagonist.* That defines it succinctly.

b. Conflict

In your plot, you must introduce conflict between the main character and his surroundings. Conflict is necessary to make your novel spicy. Conflict between the protagonist (hero) and antagonist (villain), conflict between the protagonist and the side characters and so on. Without conflict there is no excitement in a story. People hate to see everyone agreeing with each other. Introduce some conflict.

3. Setting

Where is your novel set? It might be set in modern age India, it might be set in ancient Europe, it might be set in a fantasy world such as Middle Earth. Wherever, it doesn't matter. But it must be believable and it must stay consistent.

4. Theme

What is your novel about? Is it about crime, about politics, about realism or about fantasy? What is the theme of the story? How will readers feel after reading it? If you answer these questions, you have a theme.

5. Style and Grammar

Writing voice, point of view, style and grammar matter. If you break the rules, sometimes it's for the better. But it's always better to know them before breaking them. If you make a spelling mistake, be sure to correct it with proof-reading. Nothing gives away the

amateurishness of a writer more than a spelling mistake. Always remember that spell checkers are helpful but they are not designed to replace good solid editing.... border and boarder are both spelled correctly but they mean two very different things. Use the right form of the word.

What Should Be Told and Shown in the Opening Chapter?

An ideal first chapter tells the reader only what's necessary. After all you can't finish a story in a chapter can't you? (Well you can with short stories but that's another story.) You must tell the reader the main parts, not the subsidiary parts. The things which are important must be in the front, in the opening chapter. The subsidiary parts should have the backseat.

Now, you may ask, "What the heck are the main and subsidiary parts?"

There are some things called subplots. These things are important – they add depth and reality to a story – but for that reason, they must be given secondary importance. Plots come first, subplots come second. All the loose ends come third. Which then leads us to the question, "So what exactly are the main parts? What exactly should be told and shown in the opening chapter?"

The main parts are:

1) The main character

A good story is mostly character-driven, with a superb plot added. That is why you must make the character as interesting as possible. Hollow characters? No. Clichéd characters? Again a big no-no. Same goes for two-dimensional characters and characters that are perfect in every way.

There is no limit to how many characters you can have in a story... but as always, fewer are better. Too many characters can slow down your plot and have the reader stop caring about them. Three or four human characters can do the trick... and notice I said the word 'human.' That's not to say you can't have robots or animals, it's just that everyone must have some human quality at least. Stories that have a larger cast needs to have part of the cast relegated to secondary characters so the focus stays on only three or four.

And therefore... you must make a great main character; a character that the readers will care about. To do that, experiment with mixing the qualities of any character you've read about and liked. If one mixes with some common sense and a healthy hope to try to be unique, chances are, you may actually make a unique character in the process. If you have one, show him/her to the readers. Make the readers believe that this is going to be the main character they'll read about. Show why that particular character is so great. Keep doing that in a clear, compelling manner.

Notice how I keep writing “show” instead of “tell.” We all know the old rule: “Show, don’t tell.” It applies even today. The reader doesn’t care that “She was feeling very sad,” but he/she does care when you say “Hot and blinding tears rolled down her cheeks.” That’s showing, not telling. I know it’s a hard rule to follow. But as with anything, practice makes perfect.

Conclusion: – In the opening chapter, you must tell the reader several important things about the main character, but only the ones they’ll care about. I’ll elaborate in another post. Show him why he/she is interesting and great to read about and the reader’s interest will be hooked.

2) The main plot

Consider this scenario: you have a cast of great characters. You’ve got one who has now become a shell of a man, due to deep reasons. You’ve got one who is ambitious and daring but has one main fear. You’ve got another one who is hated by everyone else, but has something unique.

OK fine. Great. But – now what? Characters alone don’t make a story. They’re just some of the main ingredients. And all ingredients are necessary, as core competencies. And one of them is... the main plot.

The plot is the one thing that creates conflict. That makes the characters struggle. It makes them flawed, and then shows their flaw to everyone. That makes them determined and above all, a human. It’s one thing, and it’s called the plot.

It’s extremely difficult to do. Impossible? Well no. But practice is necessary. Otherwise – you’ve got great characters, but no plot. No proper architecture. No foundation. Your story, like a badly-made house, will fall upon its pillars. It won’t work. And that’s why... you’ve got to have a great plot.

Now you’ve got to show it to the reader in a compelling manner. One which makes the reader actually read. To do that – show only what the character has to struggle to do; show only which is hard. Like mountain-climbing (it can be a character’s secret dream to do). Never show something which is easy and has the reader say, “Hey, even I can do that.” Show the best conflicting parts of the plot in the opening chapter; show only which is near impossible. And show only which your character can’t do.

3) The theme of your story

The theme is what distinguishes the bestsellers from any other books. I’ll use an example of Inkheart by Cornelia Funke. I found it a great read. Why? The characters were good; the plot was good as well. But what actually did distinguish it? Its theme! I mean, reading aloud

produces characters... readers were like “wow!” And your novel must be the same. Things you already have: A great theme. It’s there, in your mind.

Things which you can do: Perfect it.

Why Hunting for Plots is Worthless

Plots are limited, and that’s a fact. If you think you can make up a unique plot all by yourself, think again. I’m not saying that it isn’t possible – maybe you can do it – but it’s as difficult as climbing Mt. Everest without oxygen.

Why is this so? Because there have been writers for centuries and centuries, and every plot you think of has already been done, been written or been told in one form or another. The details may be different – the characters may be different, and the setting may be different. But the plot will be similar; the issue of plagiarism will rise. It’s a big claim to make. Is your writing original? Maybe you struggle with plots. Maybe you can’t seem to find a suitable plot. Maybe it doesn’t fit. Maybe it seems like it’s been done before, and many times.

And this statement may be true. After all, there only so many plots in the world. The human brain can’t make up plots. What are plots anyway? They are happenings. When you write them, it feels that they are fictional, that they haven’t been done before. But they have been. They were real once. Then stories were told of the real happenings. Facts were twisted a bit. Imagination was brought in to make them more dramatic, more story like.

The result? You had a plot. This went on for centuries. In fact, Christopher Brooker said that in the world, there are only seven different plots in fiction. All over the world, editors agree with him, saying there are only so-and-so plots, man against nature, man against man, man against himself, etc. New stories may be unique and special, but the plot which acts as the foundation of them most certainly isn’t.

Now we worry about plots. We search and hunt for plots. We search out brains in vain. We look at the newspapers. We get a few, but then worry that they aren’t unique. We search again. We buy books. We watch TV. We listen to the radio, hoping to catch the One Plot which Evades Us. Nothing happens. No plot, only frustration. That’s when we see that hunting for plots is futile, worthless, and useless.

Search for Ideas, Don't Hunt for Plots

Roald Dahl once said that he wrote down ideas which appeared to him in a small notebook. He said that he did this because "plots themselves are very hard to come by. Each year they get harder and harder to find."

I loved that last statement, because it is an acknowledgment that plots are limited and as new books are published, they get more and more so. An idea is better. There are so many ideas. Hunting for an Idea isn't as futile as hunting for a plot, because ideas can be unique, and plots can't (at least now).

Where can you find ideas? Everywhere; even in your own previous writing. Your journal (if you happen to have one). Newspapers, novels, television, films, etc. Don't try to steal plots; if you do, then your writing will not be original, and that's a strong bad assessment. Only try to take an idea. If you can't seem to find one, then make it up. Ideas are often only a sentence or two long. If you told me to find ideas, I would give you 500 in 15 minutes (no exaggeration). If I had to write a story for each of them, then I wouldn't have time to hunt for anymore.

You can make up ideas just by reading and observing. It's as simple as that, the same formula for trying to write an essay. If you really do observe, then naturally, ideas will occur to you. Take a good one.

Once you have an idea...

Create a Character

Yes. Create a three dimensional character. Create his flaws. Create his ambition. Create everything, his looks, his intellect, the things he excels at, and the things he fails at. He should be like a real life person. Make him as three-dimensional as possible – flaws and issues create believability as long as it isn't overwhelming. If a character is prone to bad luck, making small horrible things happens is realistic but to have three major accidents or issues in a week is not.

If you do manage to create a character that matches the description above you deserve some congratulations. Then you don't need to worry about a plot. Because there's a well-known expression out there, the one which says "Let your characters take the wheel." Yes, you do need to plan beforehand (your idea comes in handy now), you do need to know what happens ahead, but when your character leads you to a different path, maybe you need to follow him/her. Maybe it will lead to a better story. We simply call this Hijacking.

And then you realize that if you create an awesome character, there's no pressure to hunt for a unique plot. Your character will make it up. No, it won't be unique. But the story will certainly be, because your character is!

Conflict is Necessary to Make it Spicy

What is ONE of the most important things to consider when you are writing a novel? And the answer is... Conflict. Yes. Without conflict there is no excitement. Nothing gets the reader to continue from where he left off. More likely he/she'll close the book. Not a very good prospect to consider, is it? You don't want them to do that! You want them to read all the way to the last word, sigh deliciously, and say "What a great book that was. I wish I could have written it." That's a far, far better reaction.

But for the reader to do that we need to have some conflict in the book! Conflict adds flavor to a story. There are two main types of conflict: Internal Conflict and External conflict. And in any type of novel, you have to include them both. They cannot exist without each other.

Conflict is what drives the story, other than characters. Writing a conflict between two characters is most amusing. Conflict means, in a simple way, disagreement, argument, etc. And if you have all the characters in your book friends with each other with no problems at all, you aren't going to find a lot of readers. The dreaded reaction of the reader will take place.

Conflict is a struggle between two or more forces that creates a tension that must be resolved (although in some stories, as in real life, it isn't). The traditional breakdown of conflict is:

Man vs. man (external)

Man vs. nature (external)

Man vs. self (internal)

Conflict is important to literature because it provides the basic materials for the construction of the plot. Without conflict nothing would happen. Also, the conflict within a piece may be central to the author's view of life or the point he or she is trying to make.

Plot and action

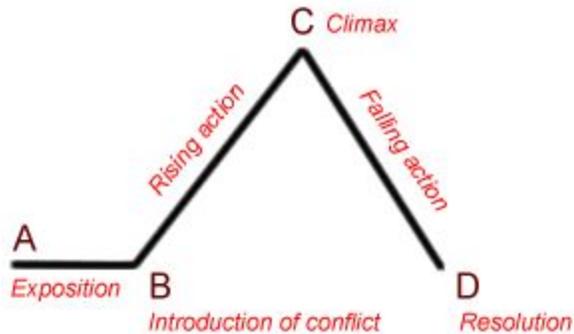
Action is the chronological sequence of events in a literary work. That action may take place externally or internally.

Plot is the way the author chooses to present the action.

Plot and action may be the same, but the author will often impose his or her interpretation of what occurs and present it out of sequence. (Consider, for example, the use of *flashbacks*, where we enter the story well after the events have occurred and are shown what happened earlier).

Freitag's triangle

One way to understand the structure of a story is to follow the model of Freitag's triangle. I will never ask you to map out a story using this, but an awareness of it may help you to understand better just what is going on.



Exposition (A-B): the exposition introduces the central character and provides background or dramatic context.

Introduction of the conflict (B), which leads to the **complication** or **rising action (B-C)**: this part of the story offers a series of events that complicates the central character's situation. At some point, something forces the character to make a decision or take a course of action. That point is known as the **deciding factor**. It causes the action to reverse itself.

Climax (C): this is the actual moment when the **deciding factor** takes place. What happens at this point determines the outcome of the piece.

Falling action (C-D): the conflict begins to resolve itself.

Resolution (D)

Writing Tip: Finding the Balance of Narrative and Dialogue

In the world of fiction writing, there are many things to explore. Subplots, conflict, Point Of View, characters, you name it. Then we add narrative and dialogue into the equation. If you've got a story, you've got to narrate it. If you've got a set of characters, they have to talk, i.e., engage in dialogue. Now where's the problem in that?

Too much of a good thing is usually a bad thing, and it applies here. Some writers use narrative a lot. Their characters aren't talkers. It's just page after page of narrative, how they did this, their journey, their perils, the people they met, the surroundings, and so on. All description. At which point your story looks like an essay which no one wants to read, rather than an amazing novel.

Dialogue is good. Unnecessary dialogue, now that's a different kettle of fish. Your dialogue must never be used for exposition. For most, narrative is required for heavy description, simply because in narrative one writes in the author's tone, but when one is writing dialogue one must write how a certain character talks. Ideally, dialogue should be used to supplement

narrative. I personally like dialogue-driven books way more than I like books which use heavy narrative, but there are separate audiences for the two categories, and there are people who will read both if the story is good.

Finding the Balance

If you have a riveting plot or engaging characters, you may get away with too much narrative or too much dialogue. But for normal people who want to maximize their chances of getting published, keep it balanced.

Of course, some situations may require heavy narrative, but you must always try to balance it up later by including dialogue. Try to use dialogue to move the plot forward, don't stall it. That is one of the main "dialogue don'ts" many editors see on manuscripts.

Even if your book is published, and your writing style is not exceptional, then people will put your book down and say it's boring. Use riveting narrative. And try to use short paragraphs, please. Heavy narrative and long paragraphs, intimidate the reader. This is a very simple mistake and very easy to avoid (or correct), but it does have drastic effects. Visually look at the page and make sure you have white space – it's relaxing for the eyes.

Any Exceptions?

In *The Lord of the Rings* many have suggested that it has too much description. Sure, it does have more than normally recommended, but the majority of the public loved the books because the author was exceptionally strong in his story. It didn't matter that his book was long or that there wasn't much dialogue. It depended on the story.

And every book is like that. Truth be told, I have read a couple of novels which had much more dialogue than narrative, but the story was so gripping that I didn't even notice. I didn't care. Most people didn't. In fact, it may have even worked out to the author's advantage, because it was a young adult/middle grade novel and typically that age group likes dialogue much more than heavy narrative.

Creative Non-Fiction: What is it?

Hence we advance to creative nonfiction. What is it? It's just writing which is true, but which also contains some creativity. Creative nonfiction differs from other nonfiction because a certain amount of creativity is needed to write in it, as for example a biography. It uses literary styles and techniques to create factually correct narratives, says Wikipedia. The best examples of Creative Nonfiction are usually written by comedians who recount funny anecdotes about their lives or their friends lives (like Erma Bombeck).

Let's suppose you've got knowledge on a famous personality. But to cover a whole life in a single book is a pretty hard task. The purpose isn't just to give information; it's to show things, it's to entertain and intrigue the reader, or show them accounts of the subject in a compelling and creative manner. That, in a nutshell, is the meaning of creative nonfiction.

There is high demand for biographies and autobiographies. But what else constitutes creative nonfiction? There are memoirs, published by famous business people. Some of them sell over a million copies. Then there are essays. There can be short essays and there can be long essays. There are food and travel books. There is literary journalism. We'll look at them in a while. First, let's take a look at the autobiography...

An Autobiography is...

An autobiography is the book about the whole life of a person, written by the person itself (hence the "auto" in autobiography). An autobiography is pretty much essential in some political fields. It is now expected for celebrities to produce autobiographies. It is almost needless to say that in autobiographies people *tend* to portray themselves in a more positive light. In the same case, when people write unauthorized biographies, it becomes the opposite and all the negative qualities are brought to the light. The autobiographies and biographies of personalities, heroes, etc. are can sell like hot cakes.

The Difference between Autobiographies and Other Similar Forms of Creative Nonfiction

An autobiography differs from a biography in the significant fact that it is written by the person of whom it is based on. The biography is written by a different person. Then there is the memoir. Memoirs, although written by the person of whom it is based on, does not cover the whole life of the person. They cover only a select time period or single experience.

The Types of Autobiographies

1. Diaries
2. Fictional (consider it as first person novel)
3. Sensationalist (mostly written by ghostwriters)
4. Memoirs may be considered as autobiographies; but not all autobiographies are memoirs.

A Biography is...

is very similar to an autobiography. A biography is a description or account of someone's life and the times, usually published in a book or essay form, sometimes as a documentary using the other forms of media (usually TV). How to tell if a work is biographical or not? There's one simple question to ask. It is: Does it cover all of a person's life? If yes, then it is a biography. If not, then it does not deserve that title.

The Two Types of Biographies

There are authorized biographies and unauthorized biographies. Authorized biographies tend to portray the positive sides of a person in their work since they are written on the approval and with the support of the person who the biography is about. Whereas unauthorized biographies tend to do the opposite. Unauthorized Biographies can be viewed as an intrusion of privacy in the subject's life.

A Memoir is...

As a literary genre, a memoir (from the French: *mémoire* from the Latin *memoria*, meaning "memory", or a reminiscence), forms a subclass of autobiography – although the terms 'memoir' and 'autobiography' are almost interchangeable in modern parlance. Memoir is autobiographical writing, but not all autobiographical writing follows the criteria for memoir. It only covers a select period of the subject's life or a single experience. The author of a memoir may be referred to as a memoirist.

Have you ever tried writing a memoir? I used to think that they could only be written by politicians, famous personalities to write about their career, businessmen, military men and generally those that are, well, known. What an understatement. The vast majority of us don't get the title famous. Recently I discovered that absolutely anyone can write a memoir and if well written, can give pleasure to the reader because of its literary style. In his memoir *Palimpsest*, Gore Vidal defines a memoir as "how one remembers one's own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates, facts double-checked."

Tips and Tricks to Improve Your Creative Writing

Don't worry; it's very simple to improve your creative writing and grow it to the next level. Everyone has some tips and tricks up his/her sleeve; some work and some don't. This information is great for AFTER NANO. Editing uses a different side of your brain from the creative side so get your manuscript written and THEN focus on making it perfect.

Read up on Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation

Before you get offended for me making such a suggestion, let me elaborate. There are some common misspellings found on the internet; "It's and its", "there and their and they're", "loose and lose" and so on. So if you make such a common mistake, people will see you as an amateur.

Grammar mistakes are as common as spelling mistakes. Some new school people say go ahead and break the grammar rules. But not all grammar rules were made by stodgy people, and most make sense. If it appeals to you to break them, go ahead, but you must know the reason why you broke it in the first place, and why it wasn't appropriate. If you don't know that you broke a rule or why, your credibility goes out the window. So that is why, if you really want to become a credible writer (who is not governed by the rules, go read up on grammar, spelling and punctuation. A single book or two will clear confusions, enabling you to break rules knowing why you broke them, and allow you to consciously follow sensible rules and more.

Tip: – *Don't rely on Microsoft Word's Grammar Checker. Its spell check is alright (not perfect so don't depend on it exclusively), but the grammar tool is atrocious. Many has been the time that it shows up its infamous green line under my words and calls out for incorrect and so called grammatically correct changes. Have you ever seen a "Fragment (consider revising)" call to change? It's perfectly alright to ignore that, because you're not writing a textbook, you're a creative writer. However, sometimes your sentence fragments are distracting and difficult to read and comprehend because it is not a full idea; so be aware of the rules and know why you are choosing to break them.*

Debunk the myth of editing and proofreading

Most creative writers hate the task of editing and proofreading. There are a thousand excuses to avoid it. "It saps my creativity." "I like my writing as it is." Some excuses are pretty funny... And although some people seem to just hate the words, they're actually pretty necessary in the world of creative writing.

Proofreading corrects mistakes so that they won't happen again. You can actually hire a proofreader if you don't like to edit your own work, but most feel you should at least make a first edit and then hand it to the editor. If, however, you fear that by editing too soon you will

delete everything, then let your manuscript rest for a few months so that when you come back to it, it is fresh and you can see the errors and make creative changes that don't involve too much of the delete button. The editor will suggest changes. Some of them will be for the better, but you won't like some of them. That's because everyone has different tastes. If you proofread your own work, you'll be a better creative writer. How?

Because you'll see what mistakes you made before, and your brain will know not to do them again. By repeating this process time and time again, you'll begin to make fewer mistakes and learn more about style and language. By doing this, you are growing your writing to the next level with proof reading.

Revise your first draft to make it shine

So you've written something. You're happy. You're ready to show it to the world. You're ready to say "I've written something and it's good." My advice: stop. Your first draft won't be much good. You might have the greatest plot and characters in history, and your scenery and everything may be perfect. But still... that first draft is only rough, unpolished wood. If you want to make something of it, you're going to have to revise it until it shines.

Revising does include proofreading and editing, but it is much more than that. It takes time from a week to several months. Edit for structure - For flow - For holes - For cutting a lot of prose - For characters and setting - For better plot. When all of that editing is done, you've then completed the mammoth task of revising. If you've done it wisely, then the wood ought to be polished, it ought to shine. And it will too, if you've got a great work in the first place.

Get rid of flowery prose, unnecessary adjectives and adverbs

Most of the time, adjectives and adverbs aren't necessary. Want an example? You got it:

1. *He ate his food quickly.*
2. *He gulped down his food.*

Which of the two is better? If you're like most people, you'll say #2. That's because it uses a strong verb rather than relying upon an adverb. It is best to make sentences short, simple, and punchy. Cut all unnecessary adjectives and adverbs. You should always look for ways to improve your writing regardless of how good it is today.

Editing and Proofreading – Busting the Myths

So you've written a novel. Oh, okay, let's not use the word 'novel'. Say anything: short story, essay, just any form of writing. You've written the first draft. You think it's good. You think it's great. You think it's wonderful.

But it's not ready to be distributed or shown to anyone else yet. Before that, there is what some writers call the 'mammoth' task of editing/rewriting. No contradictory information, no confusing sentences, no overused words, no kid-like grammar, and the like. Similarly, checking for spelling mistakes (typos) or grammar mistakes (called by some as grammos) is known as proofreading. Some authors use Beta readers to catch these errors because when you are close to your novel, your brain will automatically correct errors and they will go unseen. Others reading your work will not have that problem.

Editing is not as hard as it looks. Nor is it boring. It's can be fun.

Yes, I'm not kidding. It can be fun to correct your work. Although it's not as much fun to correct the same mistake over and over again. 😞 To fix broken sentences, to correct grammar – the fun of that depends on you. And what about proof reading? Well, even that's not as hard as most people think. Yes, it is a bit boring—in fact, very boring at the start—but it's immensely rewarding. When you go over the same thing twice and find that all previous mistakes were corrected by you, the author, the feeling which comes is a great sense of achievement!

As a matter of fact, proofreading your own work is also helpful long-term. When the brain collects information about what kind of mistakes it's doing, it will not do the same mistakes again. Grammatical errors such as the wrong use of the apostrophe, "its" vs. "it's" or "accept" vs. "except" will be done plenty of times in the first draft. But as you keep editing, proofreading, writing, editing and proofreading all over again, you'll find that the mistakes will gradually reduce. The brain will get more competitive.

Proofreading: proofreading generally means to check your work minutely for typos, grammatical errors, strange repetition of words, accidental contradictory information and the like. Although they're highly annoying to correct the first time, it's also rewarding to see after a period of time that you're no longer making those mistakes just because you made them in the first place.

So now we know that editing and proofreading is not as hard as it looks, and it's also rewarding! Now, will you hate editing your draft again? 😊

Proofreading: Catching Contextual Spelling Errors: aka Spell Checz

We all know how annoying it is to catch typos. It's just not cool. If you make one or two of them, you might get away without anyone pointing it out. If you make loads of them, your credibility suffers.

But this article is not about making typos. It's about catching contextual typing errors. These are common spelling mistakes which don't have their spelling wrong, just that you picked the wrong word. Yeah... sounds complicated... but the gist of it is that if you write "loose" instead of "lose", the newer version of MSWord will underline the mistake with a blue underline and have suggestions to correct it. It also works for other common mistakes. But don't depend on this to catch your errors.

So to solve the problem, you must know all the common contextual spelling and typing mistakes and when proofreading, be ready to manually correct them. Examples include: "Your" and "You're", "There", "Their" and "They're", "Its" and "It's" and so on. No writing program can be relied upon to call out these mistakes every time, because it sometimes does and sometimes doesn't apply. It's better to correct them manually.

Four Reasons Why You Must Manually Correct Contextual Spelling Mistakes

1. It shows that you are familiar with the English language. That's a big plus. Earlier I said that making many typos hampers your credibility. This one does the opposite: it strengthens it. Of course, ordinary readers don't care either way, but if you avoid these mistakes you won't subconsciously confuse them and you won't make grammarians angry. Win-win.
2. It increases the chance of your not making the mistakes next time. It's complex, but studies have proved, if you make mistakes one time, you will not make these mistakes once again because of the brain memorizing certain facts. What to do, and what not to do. So if you make these mistakes one time, you must correct them manually first by proofreading and editing. This way you know what mistakes you make when writing. That's another good thing to know. And then, the next time you write something and then proofread it, bravo! Fewer mistakes found of the same form. If you keep doing the checks, you'll notice that as time goes on, your mistakes become fewer, fewer and then none at all.
3. It makes you learn more grammar. Grammar is important for writing. Some people just don't like having to go through the grammar books once again. But if you proof read and learn one thing at a time, you'll find automatically that you have committed a topic of grammar to memory.
4. It makes your writing more pleasurable to read. Eh? How? Easy. Grammar actually increases readability if you use it in the right way. By avoiding the common mistakes

which plague all writers, your writing stands out from the pack. More readers! Writing which was good *had* some readers in the past. These days? Not so much. If you want your writing to be read in this period, you're going to have to make it *great*. Even more, you must make it *spectacular*.

What about Typing Errors that Don't Have Anything to Do with Context?

You mean those ones where you actually want to type "fat", but type "rat"? These are typing mistakes, not spelling mistakes. For that, you just have to improve your typing... just kidding. Even for that, you must proofread. What if you don't? Nothing but bad results will occur then. These type of mistakes are absolutely the worst in my opinion, because they confuse the readers the most. Even a spell checker misses them. Just plan to print a copy of your work and proofread and edit from the hard copy. You WILL catch more errors.

Getting Bogged Down in Editing – Help!

Does the edit-as-you-go method work? Or does it not? Is it the best method out there, or the worst? If it does work, for whom does it and for whom it doesn't? It works, yes. But only for a few people. There are many people for whom it does not work. And during the NANOWRIMO Challenge, it is detrimental to you reaching your word count goal. Most writers and publishing houses will tell you to COMPLETE YOUR WORK FIRST, then edit. Because if you try to edit while creating, you switch your creative brain off and move into analytical brain mode and this happens:

1. While writing a scene or chapter, you'll stop suddenly and read what you have written. And you'll make a hundred changes to that scene alone.
2. The next day you'll make a thousand changes (exaggeration) to the whole text of your work as of yet. When you are finally done with your edit, you'll take a breather. But you still don't know what the end of the story is going to be.
3. But then you'll discover one thing which all writers must know: Your novel will never get perfect. Never, ever. You will always find something to edit. A sentence, a verb, a tense, anything. Heck, a novel is usually 80,000- 90,000 words long and you will NEVER get it to be perfect in your very exacting imagination. Why? Because we are all our own harshest critic. If you decide to edit everything you have written each day, the end will never come. You will get bogged down in editing. Your creative juices will stop flowing – and imagine what comes next?

Writer's block. Yes. Remember that there is not just one correct method to write a story or to editing a story, just as there's no limit to what a plot offers a story. However, you have to have a complete story and KNOW how it ends before you can start making edits and creative changes. Bottom line: The "Edit As You Go" method, if not used properly, can seriously hamper your writing. Whether it is your friend or enemy rests entirely with you.

No Method? No Problem!

Let's say you're writing a first draft of a novel. The dreaded first draft. And of course you are writing it very slowly – unless you are an exceptional writer. Then you read it again... and scream "There's no method in it! No organizing at all! What have I been doing? This isn't worthy of my time." And then you close the book snap shut and don't work on it anymore. Sad.

Many great 'novel' ideas have never made it into paper because of this. As the old saying goes: **First get it written, then get it right.**

In other words, you can write if you have no method! I can't emphasize this enough: finish it first! It's a bad idea to imagine anyone reading your first draft, because then you are worried about how it is and you'll most likely make a ton of changes and waste time rather than actually finishing anything. Worse, even after that, your novel won't be up to par!

So I'll advise you to stop your editing right now – and get to the hard part first. Writing it whole, that First Draft. Remember, the fun part always comes, sooner or later. And of course if you are a real writer, then you'll find writing as much as rewarding as rewriting.

Remember: there are two main stages of writing: writing it and rewriting it. Both are great to the real writer as everyone will tell you.

Common Mistakes Made by Creative Writers

Creative writing is a difficult art. We learn and we improve, yet we often slip up and make common mistakes. These mistakes are so common that everyone is tired of them, no one mentions them anymore. And as new writers come along, these mistakes are made again and again.

So to solve this problem I created a list of creative writing mistakes to avoid. By being conscious of the mistakes, you can be careful and not make them in your fiction, articles, reports, etc.

Don'ts of Creative Writing

1. Are you reading other writing? If not, you are in big trouble. Read. If you want to become a better writer, it goes without saying that you need to read to see how it's done. If you are a novelist, read novels. If you are an essayist, read essays. If you are a poet, read poetry. And so on... but if you don't read, then suffice to say, your writing will not be up to the standards you are trying to reach.
2. Are you plagiarizing your writing? It sounds easy enough, to copy paste someone else's writing and pass it off as your own. It is easy enough. If you are clever enough, you could even reword someone else's writing and pass it off as your own. But why would you want to? It won't gain you any credibility or readers. It'll just harm your reputation. Be original - make an original story.
3. Are you using big words and complicated flowery prose? There was a time when all the books written used flowery and complicated prose, and readers didn't seem to mind. That was long ago, though, and as attention spans keep shortening and the rise of short form media such as Twitter have changed the mindset. Now, people don't want to read flowery prose. They want to read short, simple and punchy sentences. They want short, not long paragraphs. They want something good but short. They want their attention to be piqued and to be entertained in a moment rather than putting forth any real effort.
4. Are you copying someone else's writing voice? Writing voice is unique. Every writer has his/her own writing voice. To test if your writing voice is unique, simply read it aloud and you will know if you compare it by reading aloud a different text. If you copy someone else's voice, your story or work will not be as good as it will be if you used your very own writing voice. It takes time to develop... but it's worth it. Just practice writing as you like it; don't try to copy famous authors' writing voices.

Now you know all the mistakes. You can avoid them. But if you still aren't satisfied with your writing? Don't worry. Some more tips and tricks are found below:

Dos of Creative Writing

1. Write as much as you can. This is also pretty well known advice, but just in case you only tried the advanced tips, remember that beginner tips work very well too. Have a

regular writing schedule. Some popular writers say that you must write every day. And while that might prove challenging on some days, try it anyways.

2. Try to make your openings as compelling and grabbing as possible. If you begin at the beginning, don't use well known openings such as first day in school, packing for new house, etc. Grab the reader with compelling openings. In fiction, your opening chapters must be as interesting as possible. Think about other books and how they opened and caught you. If you can't catch your reader in 3 pages, you won't catch them.
3. Hunt for new writing methods, processes and advice. It's all very well to follow a given writing method, a given process, and some given advice. But after some time, when you feel your writing getting stale, it's time to step out of your boundary a little bit and hunt for everything new. Where? Anywhere, of course. The Internet is a big resource. Then there are creative writing books etc. etc.

Top Ten Tips to Fight and Defeat Writer's Block

Writer's block is common. In fact, it's so common that there have been countless posts on how to avoid it, and how to cure it if it's there already.

Some people say there is no such thing as writer's' block. It's just an excuse for procrastination. After all, these people say, how many other professions are there in which one can say he can't work because he has a block? Is there a bricklayers' block or something? Are we missing something?

I think we can all safely say that there *is* a thing called writer's block. It's not the same for everyone. Some people may be so talented or get extremely lucky to the point that they don't get writer's block, ever. That's a good thing. But the vast majority of writers have had to face writer's block at least once in their career. At least once, they were attacked by it. But they managed to fight it, and defeat it. Can we do the same? What a silly question. So let's learn how, without further wasting time...

Defeat writer's block with these ten tips

1. Do something else. The best and most common tip ever. It's always recommended to write regularly, but too much of a good thing is usually a bad thing, and this is not an exception for writer's block. If your brain gets overtaxed, you don't have an option to do anything but *something else*. Go for a long walk. Practice your other favorite hobby. Read a good novel. Do something recreational. It's the best method and the most guaranteed – you will see positive results.
2. Write something else. Maybe your problem is more genre-related. Maybe you're writing too much in one genre. That's what happened to me, and I solved the problem by changing my writing genre for a while (from YA to romance). So if you get writer's block when you get down to write that super-duper novel which is so excellent, maybe it's

time to take a break from that and focus on some creative nonfiction for a little bit. The examples are generic, but the conclusion is: if you get the dreaded block in one genre, try another for a little bit and then be pleased when the ideas come flowing back..

3. Don't write what you don't like (and what you consider boring). When in writing, you get writer's block because you're forced to write something which bores you to tears, then the solution is simple: just don't do it. In fiction, writers commonly get writer's block when they write the transitional scenes. So skip that, and act as if nothing happened. You will thank yourself for it, but even better, your readers will thank you for it.
4. Try a different writing style. This is a big one! Writers get tired with one voice if they use it for long, and if it isn't really good in the first place. So if you're tired writing formal letters, try writing the informal ones (and vice versa). But it goes beyond voice. Tired of writing the post headline and introduction first in blogging? Well, start with your conclusion and work backwards. Tired of writing in the same word processor with the same font and the same aesthetics (format)? Try a different one. In this way, experiment and try new things, and your block will disappear as if it never existed.
5. Try a different writing medium. Another big one! There are primarily two writing mediums: pen and paper and the computer. So if you're tired of writing on the keyboard, think as if it never existed and take out your paper and pen. When you write with pen on paper, you don't get the privilege to erase what you write and keep editing endlessly. That's a good thing. But the tips don't stop just here. Even in paper, there are distinctions. First of all there is the good old notebook (or notepad or writing pad). Journals, big exercise books, college books, spiral books and more. Try them all out: variety is the spice of life. Once again, this moves you forward in your battle against writer's block.
6. Get creative. This is kind of related to the previous point. Writers get tired writing with one style, writing with one pen, writing on the same paper, or just doing what has been done before. So a popular advice is to get creative. Use a funky pen. Try a special handwriting font. Try the black background with the green font. Go crazy with line breaks. The thing is, you must break out of the mold. Do something different, something special. Something which will, once again, help you defeat that writer's block monster.
7. Cut out the filler words, the needless words, adjectives and adverbs. Filler words like "very," "really," etc. cut out the life from your writing, and set the stage for writer's block attack. As the famous quote from Strunk & White says, omit needless words. That's not to say that you must omit words unnecessarily. Cut only which is not awesome – keep the great stuff! And there are the adjectives and adverbs. More often than not, they can be replaced by strong verbs. If you do this, not only will your writing get more magnetic, writer's block will be on its knees and get nearly defeated.
8. Write with heart, not because you have to. And this is related to your heart, and how much you like writing. As I've said many times before, you must love writing if you want to be good at it. Don't think of it as a job. Think of it as something you like to do, as something you can't do without. You don't have to write every day, but you should write as often as you can. But just write with heart; write with feelings and emotions, not just dry figures. To write with heart you must have a subject that you like, a language that you are familiar with, and words that are your friends. Seems difficult – it is. But is there anything easy in the world of writing?

9. Keep writing. The above tips do work, but another extremely common tip is to, well, keep writing. Keep fighting and keep solving the problems. It won't be easy and it won't be quick. But if you love writing, all of this is trivial, isn't it?
10. If none of this works, go back and re-read the last 2 scenes. In them you made at least one of the characters do something that is completely outside of what they would do and now they are mad at you and aren't talking to you. SO go back and find that one thing that has stalled out your work. Once that is changed , you'd be surprised how fast you will be back in your character's good graces.

Writing Tip: The Importance of Word Count

This writing tip is about the importance of word count. Boring word count. How can it matter? Most people don't even know what it is, and those that do, think it's just an "aside". It doesn't matter. Or does it?

Let's get that question out of the way. Yes, word count matters. It is an aside, yes, but that doesn't mean it isn't important. The fact that most readers don't know about your word count doesn't say that they don't care. Knowing and caring about something is different. Some people might not know the technical term. Maybe they don't even think of it. But it matters to how your work is classified. So, what is a word count?

The definition of word count

Word count is nothing more than the length of a piece, whether it is a novel, a story, a blog post, a magazine article or a sales letter. The type of the work matters because its word count is affected by it. For example a novel will always be longer (80,000 words) than a magazine article (usually 1000 words).

In the same way, some types of novels will be longer than others. A short story is usually over 1000 words but also less than 20,000 words. So there are short stories of word count ranging anywhere between them. What about novels? There are 50,000 word novels. These are basically the shortest ones. There are 80,000 ones, 100,000 ones, and even 120,000 ones. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* is 257,000 words long. It (the length) depends. But upon what? Keep reading...

Why is word count important?

Word count is important because it helps you select your readers. For example, if you write a novel and it is long, about 100,000 words long, then naturally there will be some readers to whom it is not suitable (just because of the word count). Readers' examples include children who are interested in the novel itself but can't read due to the high word count. If your novel appears too big in shelves, you know you've got a problem because you automatically exclude a number of people.

In contrast, if you've got a low word count, then your work will be more suitable for some people and not for others. Of course, you must make it as concise as possible: this is necessary when writing anything in the world. But you have the risk of it appearing too thin on the shelves (if it is published, that is).

Note: The word count is not the only deciding factor why your work is suitable for some and not for others. It is just one of many. The most deciding factor is usually the content of the work itself.

Word count for nonfiction

Nonfiction can be shorter or longer than fiction: once again, it depends. There are fat books which you have trouble picking up and then there are short articles which end before you read them. These examples are extreme, yes, but it goes to say that there is no given word count for anything, even nonfiction.

Have an appropriate word count for your readers

This is totally up to you. I only want to say that a wrong word count always manages to mess things up. You should generally know how much word count your work has when you write. If you write in Microsoft Word, the newer versions show up your word count as you type in the status bar of the window (it changes dynamically when you type).

If you've got a short word count for those who prefer short word counts, then it's great. Same thing if you've got a long word count for those who prefer them. It all depends on the content anyway, and if you've really got something good then you'll get exceptions. In this case, word count doesn't matter — it really is an aside. You should be more worried about making your writing concise.

What's the point of word count?

To be honest, if word count hampers your creativity, you shouldn't focus on it. It's that simple. Word count is something that requires attention in the editing and proofreading stage. If you're typing out a first draft, forget word count. Forget structure. Get the thing finished first, as it goes: *"First get it written, then get it right."*

Writing Tip: Use Vivid Description

What is good writing?

Even though the correct answer is that whether a piece of writing is good or not rests entirely with the reader, many people think that good writing is effective writing. And it's true. Good writing follows a flow. Good writing is focused. Good writing is written for a purpose. Good writing is grammatically correct and readable. Good writing uses vivid description.

Vivid Description – What it is

Vivid description is writing which makes you feel as if you are standing there, right there where the author has just described something. Vivid description appeals to the senses – eyes, nose, ears, skin, etc. You use vivid description when you describe something, whatever it may be. And make note: – Vivid description is undesirable in some cases. Too much of a good thing is usually a bad thing (once again!).

How to use vivid description

If you want to use vivid description, then you want to play with all the senses. Don't just say the wind is fast. Compare it with something that the readers are familiar with. As an example, compare these two sentences:

- A. The wind was very fast.
- B. The wind blew through house and scattered the documents throughout the room.

Which example is better? For most, it's the second one.

Rather than leaving the details to the reader's imagination, why not list them out in your writing? It is incredibly annoying to imagine something based on what has been written only to discover that our image is wrong. In contrast, if we had the proper details, wouldn't we imagine better? Wouldn't we have a clearer image of what the author is saying? Yes, we would. That's when vivid description comes in.

Description is necessary but boring, and so you have *vivid* description. Concrete details. Everything the reader would want to know and nothing more. You explain it, they understand it, and your writing is okay. But what if you want your writing to be more than just 'okay'?

Then you have to write for the senses. Hit your writing with some scent for the nose and make the reader feel as if he's there with you sniffing. Play with noise. Play with feelings and sensations. Make the writing wash over the reader, as if it's not there at all, as if he/she is seeing the event or whatever you are describing. When the reader has that feeling, then you

know that your piece was a success. Then you know your work has paid off. Then you know you're ready to see results, and all from applying a very simple writing tip: just use vivid description.

Concrete Details and Active Voice

When you are using vivid description, it's better to use the active voice, and for a good reason. Here's an example of passive voice: "The door was opened by the man". Here's the sentence rewritten with active voice: "The man opened the door" . Passive voice loses a bit of a writer's punch. It loses the "vivid" part of vivid description, and along with filler words, can completely weaken your writing. The best trick to know if you are using passive vs. active voice is find all the 'was' in your writing. Could that 'was' be replaced with a verb? It can? THEN DO IT.

When you use active voice, your writing becomes concise and more readable. You reach closer to the goal of having the reader feel that he's there with you when you describe something. Concrete details means the complete opposite of becoming a fancy writer: more punch, more strength, more vigor. Better results.

Brilliant Writing = Brilliant Description

Brilliant writing is an art form. Only few writers pen down something which may be called brilliant and they make it look easy. For the rest of us, we practice!

As with narrative and dialogue, try not to use too much description. It bores the heck out of us, and even if you've got *vivid* description, it won't help if you keep at it. Mix it up – I guarantee you will see positive results! Try it today. Experiment with various techniques. You may want to use some quotes, lists, charts or anything else to break up the description. All are recommended, so you can use any of them which you like.

Conclusion

If you've got a description, it's most likely languishing in your writing, scorned as "boring". You're worried. What do you do as a solution? The answer: make it vivid. Make it exciting. End of story.

POV: What it is and how it matters

First things first: POV means Point of View. It's a fiction writing element, and it matters in your novel. The obvious questions are: why and how?

Answer: because it's an important thing to consider when writing narrative and it can make your story better by determining its voice.

There are three types of POV: first person, second person and third person. And then there are two types of third person POV: subjective and omniscient. Today, we're going to learn what they are and which one you should use for your novel.

First person POV

First person POV is narrated by your character himself/herself. It uses the pronouns "I", "me", "we", "our", etc. In this your character is telling your story in his/her own words. He/she can only narrate the scenes in which he/she has actually been. Long expository narrative is a problem in first person POV. On the other hand, you can show the character's personality very well through this.

Since you're narrating each thought, each action, each feeling directly from your character, the reader can come to know the character because of this, and it can help your story. However to do this without a mistake you must really *know* your character. Yes, by 'know' I mean know everything about him/her. Details, appearance, personality and the whole nine yards. First person POV is suitable for some novels and not for others. Autobiographies are of course written in the first person and some of them can be a huge hit. Do your research and decide whether first person is suitable for *your* novel or not.

Second person POV

Second person POV is rarely suitable for novels because it sounds stilted and stodgy. You may want to use the second person in other works such as articles. (For e.g. I'm using first and second person in this article). Second person simply means using the pronoun "you" and narrating the story from the reader's point of view. The Choose Your Own Adventure books are one notable example of books which are hugely popular because they use second person POV. But for your normal novel, I don't recommend second person POV, and it's usually best avoided.

Third person POV

Most novels are set in the third person, and third person POV is the most common and most popular when it comes to POV for novels. It means that you, the author, narrate the story as

an invisible man who was present in the story using the pronouns “he” or “she”. For e.g. “He worked hard” and not “I worked hard”. But even in this there are two different kinds. They are:

1. Subjective or limited third person POV
2. Omniscient third person POV

Which is better? Of course, you already know the answer to this question: there’s no such thing as “better” in fiction writing. You have to choose what works best for you, the author.

Subjective third person POV

Subjective third person POV is when you use third person, but narrate the story only through a single character. That is, only the scenes which he is present. Only the things which *he* sees. You get up close to him, and don’t let him go. It doesn’t have to sound like first person, but the things you narrate must seem as if *he* is narrating (his feelings, his emotions, his thoughts etc.).

Subjective third person has worked well for many novels, and is usually the safest option you can make if you want to choose a POV for your novel because readers like it. They like having close access to your character... unless your character doesn’t hold their attention.

Example: The famous *Harry Potter* novels are written in subjective third person, and it’s a POV that’s worked for J.K. Rowling.

Omniscient third person POV

This one’s a bit like a movie camera. You’re spying on all characters. There’s no main character here when it comes to sticking to him and only narrating what happened with him. Instead, you’re looking at all characters and narrating through them all.

It offers the most freedom, but it isn’t really ideal for your novel when you consider that readers won’t have the opportunity to get close to your character and feel his personality. Of course this has adverse effects, so use omniscient third person POV with caution.

And there are hybrids. What do I mean by hybrids? I mean novels when one chapter is narrated by one character, the second a different character, the third a different character and the fourth the first character and so on. This can work for some novels if you do it right and proper, but otherwise, once again, use with caution. (Note: this is also called alternating person view).

Example: *The Inkworld Trilogy* is written in alternative person POV.

The Need to Say More with Less – Concise Writing Tips

As attention spans keep getting shorter, tight writing becomes more and more important. In recent years, people have shown a tendency to ignore and scan any content which does not appear to be written tight. But what is tight writing? Tight writing is a matter of survival, says Copyblogger Associate Editor Jon Morrow. There is another name for it – concise writing. Writing which cannot be any shorter or longer.

But it takes some time to use concise writing to your advantage. Ideally, you want your work to have as many readers as possible to judge its work. If your writing isn't concise, however, you may get some readers who like your work. The majority, however, will scan a sentence or two and then run away to the hills, never to come back.

In contrast, if your writing is concise and interesting, these people will not scan or go away. They will read. Of course their reading it doesn't guarantee your success, but it is one step closer all the same. If your writing subject matter interests the readers and if there is something for them in it, then people tend to stay and think. And, if it is great, possibly spread the word as well.

Two different consequences. One to your favor, the other not, just because the question whether your writing was concise or not decides and divides the readers' interests.

Some Concise Writing Tricks

The first ingredient of concise writing is clarity. If clarity isn't in your writing, then, suffice to say, you're doomed. Then comes the question of paragraphs. Yes, it's a common tip, but none the worse for it. I will not say you should write small paragraphs. That advice only applies to some niches. In other niches, it is perfectly fine to write long paragraphs, although this is only because of the audience. If you want your writing to be appreciated by most people, then the trick is to mix them up. Write a small paragraph. Then write a long one. Write two short ones. Then write a long one. Three short ones. And so on...

Bottom line is: don't get stuck to advice. Yes, there is plenty of great advice on the Web. Some recommends the use of short, simple sentences. I agree with that, because as most of us aren't authors, we don't handle long sentences all that well. But occasionally, you may slip in

long sentences as well between short ones. I bet you didn't realize that one of the sentences in the paragraph is a long one. Slipped in naturally and artfully, no one cares.

Use headings and subheadings in your writing. If you're a novelist, try to break up chapters and scenes as often as you can. Remember, there's no such thing as a small chapter, but there is one such as the ridiculously long chapter. If you're an article writer, try to break up long sections of it with subheads. Same goes for other literary forms of writers. If you have something long, break it up into bite sized chunks.

Use grammar and sentence structure to your advantage. You know simple, complex and compound sentences? Well, in your writing, utilize all of them. Don't use all simple sentences in your writing. Same goes with complex and compound ones. Try to use them to jolt the reader into paying attention, by not settling into a preferred sentence structure and instead using all of them. This helps readability and makes writing "sound" nicer.

Have you ever heard of something like "filler" words? If you haven't, let me explain. When we talk, we say words like "really, just, like, actually" (which are adverbs and adjectives) in our speech. There is a plus to writing like we talk, it's called dialogue. Otherwise, cut these filler words from your writing. And then you will feel (and know instantly) that your writing has improved, and you are a better writer.

7 Questions to Consider When Writing

Writing is tough, right? There are just so many things to consider when you are writing something, be it anything. It could be a:

- Blog post or article
- Fiction
- Poetry
- School paper
- Business report
- Fictional novel

There are so many, many questions to consider when writing. Some of them are useful. Some of them are not. Some of them don't improve your writing one bit.

And now we arrive at a question. It is: "When writing, what useful questions should we consider?"

Writing Questions

Consider the following things when writing something.

- What is the style of the piece you are writing? Is it factual and formal? Or edgy and quirky? Is it quite informal or is it very formal? Your writing style matters here. If you are writing a school essay, then it would be totally out of character to write it using slang words, an informal tone and the like. On the other hand, if you are writing a letter to your friends, adopting a formal style would not be the best decision. In simpler words: don't do it.
- Is the presentation good enough? I don't know why so many people neglect presentation, but the problem is common. Obviously, presentation in writing means the formatting of the piece. Are you sending a handwritten essay to your teacher? Then see whether your handwriting is good enough or not. If you are writing a business report, then check the formatting in Microsoft Word. Is it easy to read? Legible? Pleasing? Warning: don't ever use fancy fonts. They just don't work.
- What is its purpose? Before starting to write anything, you must know about its purpose. Is it written to educate? Inform? Entertain and make them laugh? Choose appropriately, and see whether your piece fulfils its purpose. If it does, you can congratulate yourself. If it doesn't... well you know you have some work to do.
- Who is the reader? I don't mean that you should have one and only one reader, but it's recommended to choose one ideal reader and then find out more about him/her. What does he/she like? What does he/she dislike? Why would he/she read your work? Note down all your reasons, and write your piece according to the answers found. I guarantee, it will make the task easier.
- Does it have a proper structure? Structure is important. Very important. You can get away with not using structure in some situations, but for most writing, the takeaway message is this: if it doesn't have a structure, it sucks. Have you put the cart before the horse? Are your thoughts and words all jumbled and not flowing smoothly? Check. Got the results? Good. Adjust accordingly.
- Is it well written? The mechanics and nuts-bolts of writing matter. What do I mean by the *nuts and bolts of writing*? Grammar. Sentence structure and composition. Spelling and punctuation. For this, you have to edit and proofread. The thing here is that these things do matter, but how much they matter, that depends on your genre. Therefore, do not break any rules of grammar unless you know precisely why you are breaking them (for what reason).
- Will it make an effect? This is arguably the most important. Will your writing have an impact? If you are writing a novel, will it make an effect on the editor so that he/she will think that this is good? If you are writing a blog post, will it spread virally? Tough questions, and you can't really know the answers. Just try and write and test.

Some final notes and Thoughts:

Over 300,000 people across the globe take the National Novel Writing Month Challenge and about 20% (or about 60,000 people) complete the challenge.

This is entirely DO-ABLE in a month -- the trick is to stay focused and just keep writing.

You are creating a first draft -- ALL first drafts need work. Don't judge yours so harshly. There will be drek in it, but there will also be moments of absolute brilliance.

You can't do a rewrite or a revision without having a manuscript -- and it's best to have a finished manuscript so you know where the story is going.

At some point in the month you will hit a wall -- come to the meetings -- you have a built in sounding board and brainstorm team that want to see you cross the finish line.

The only thing keeping you from completing the challenge is yourself -- don't listen to the mean voices in your head, only hear the ones helping you tell the story.

Be involved with your writing group during the month (and longer if you like). Statistically, the people that attended the meetings and write in opportunities finished their manuscripts. In 2012 Copper Quills had 40% of the members finish the Challenge, in 2013 we have 63% (including one writer in the young writers program) and in 2014, 13 out of 14 writers who attended nearly every meeting finished the challenge.

Copper Quills meets all year long -- check out our facebook page at www.facebook.com/ButteNano

We are glad you decided to take the plunge so.....

"COME ON IN, THE WATER'S FINE!!!!!!!"