

Top Writing Tips

Jeremy Sheldon and Suchen Christine Lim share six useful ideas to take the future of your writing forward.

Jeremy's tips:

Name that stranger that comes into your head. Cities are overflowing with characters who could potentially be the stars of your next short story or novel. Giving these characters a name will give you a handle to hold on to this stranger when you start to write.

Own a good dictionary and thesaurus. Do not trust the one in your laptop. Also, enjoy searching out the precise meanings of words. Sometimes researching the history of a word's meaning will help you uncover a hidden aspect to the word in question and allow you to bring something subtle or unexpected to the page.

Get used to re-writing. There's no escaping writing a first draft with all its instinctive promise but also all its inevitable flaws. Get used to getting your first draft down on the page and resign yourself to the hard but ultimately rewarding job of editing your work.

Suchen's tips:

Write every day, even if it's just 10-15 minutes. Writing is like playing the piano. If you don't practise every day, you won't play well. Writing every day develops your sense of your craft and helps you practise connecting your imagination with your pen or keyboard.

Do spend time cleaning your apartment or doing the laundry. Housework anchors you to real life, keeps you sane...and prevents writer's cramp!

Also, once it's done, you have no excuses except to sit down...and write.

Do not be greedy when you write. There's often a temptation, especially when it's going well, to write until you're ready to drop. Many working writers know the value of leaving something for the next day. Some even deliberately finish a day's work in the middle of a sentence. Leaving something incomplete might make you want to return to it more strongly the next day.

Do not give up. The world doesn't "owe" you a novel. But if you persevere and put the hours in, you might be surprised at what you can achieve.