

Top Writing Tips

My Five: Top Writing Tips by **Julia Bell**

Julia Bell, UK novelist and lecturer, shares her essential writing tips...

1. Get rid of all distractions –

if you have to, disconnect your wi-fi. There's a great app called Freedom which disables your wi-fi: <http://macfreedom.com/>. This has saved me many hours of working time from the rabbit hole that is the internet.

2. Focus on what's in front of you.

A good writer can make a short walk across an empty room seem interesting. Try with what you can see now, beyond the computer screen on which you are reading these words. What's the view out of the window? What does the floor look like? The walls? What sounds can you hear? What smells? This kind of close focus is the stuff of good fiction. Get in the habit of noticing your surroundings.

3. Write every day.

Even if it's only a shopping list. Writing is a habit as well as an art.

4. Read every day.

Even if it's only a bus timetable. Reading gives you language, ideas, jumping off points. Take vocabulary from your reading and record it in your notes books – any unusual words, odd sounding phrases, quotes you want to remember. Your notebooks then become a record of the journeys that you have taken in your reading.

5. Your characters

need to be written before they'll become fully-rounded people. You don't know who they are when you first start writing them as you haven't really spent enough time with them yet. Don't expect to know them completely right away. Getting to know them over time is part of the point - uncovering them as you go along.

6. Don't overdo it.

See point 3. Writing everyday and doing nothing else will quickly burn out your inspiration. Take time out to go for walks or to museums and galleries or to the cinema, theatre, etc. to places which inspire your creativity. Again, use point 2 here, take note of where you are, what things look like, who else is around. You are a body and a consciousness in the world –

use your senses and your intellect to explore it. Check out the blog of creativity guru Keri Smith <http://www.kerismith.com/>. Her books are great too as a way into this kind of creative exploration in practice.