

## Let me recommend some favourite books about the craft of writing:

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| 1. Anne Lamott      | Bird by Bird.           |
| 2. DBC              | Pierre Release the Bats |
| 3. William Strunk   | Elements of Style       |
| 4. Stephen King     | On Writing              |
| 5. Steven Preissner | The War of Art          |
| 6. Ray Bradbury     | The Zen Art of Writing  |

## Writing Tips

1. Write and put it away. This is your first draft. Come back to it in a couple of weeks with fresh eyes, edit and rewrite.
2. Editing means making sure your sentences make sense, your grammar and spelling are correct. George Orwell said never use a long word when a short one will do. Try to use the active rather than the passive voice -it's much better to say, 'He robbed the bank' rather than 'The bank was robbed.' Eliminate clichés, adverbs and unnecessary adjectives and any unnecessary 'which' and 'that' – they can often be eliminated completely. The key to creative writing is to show the reader what is happening not tell them. Adjectives and adverbs are 'tell' words. If you say horrifying, hideous, delightful too often, you are asking the reader to do your job for you. Use your verbs, they are your strongest weapons. 'He raced' is much stronger than 'he ran quickly.' As Chekov said, 'Don't TELL me the moon is shining, SHOW me the glint of light on broken glass.' Try this: 'Kate was tired.' This is 'Tell' Rewrite as 'Show' e.g. – she lay sprawled on the couch, eyes closed, her arms lolling by her side. Now you try – 'It was early spring.' 'Joey was afraid.' 'Arthur's mother was angry. She hit him. It was painful.' 'Bill was frightened, he thought someone was behind him.' When editing or reading other people's work I have found it useful to ask myself - What is wrong? What is missing? What isn't clear? What doesn't make sense? (this is how PIXAR edits)
3. Write for yourself not for others.
4. Stories are plot driven or character driven, you will find yourself drawn to a style.
5. READ widely. Read different styles. Read for voice. John Boyne's The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas. Mark Haddon's The Curious incident of the Dog in the Night-time. Graeme Simsion's The Rosie Project. Crime novels lean heavily on plot. If you like writing plot driven stories, then read crime. A good way to start a plot driven story is to ask yourself a 'What if?' question like... 'what if a shark swam into a beach resort?'

Sally Rooney's books *Normal People* and *Conversations with Friends* are examples of character driven story. Read Irish authors, they've always been amazing and there is an explosion of new ones now. We are in a golden age of writing.

6. Writing dialogue. Use 'said' instead of exclaimed, announced, etc. It is invisible to a reader's eyes and makes reading faster and easier. Dialogue is great for moving along a story. Remove all chit/chat words that you hear in everyday dialogue. The trick in dialogue is making each voice sound different. How are you going to do this?
7. Use all 5 senses.
8. Writing has a rhythm like music, the action rises and falls. Imagine a movie camera going in for close ups of an actors face then pulling back. You never spend the whole movie watching the close-up, you get a sense of the surroundings too. Writing is the same. It has a pattern – there is an introduction, then the action rises, the action progresses, the stakes are raised – often the main character has something to lose, there is a final push by the hero and then the dénouement which is simply French for 'happy ever after' or the conclusion or climax. *Into the Woods* by John Yorke is a very good book on this and Blake Snyder's *Save the Cat*.
9. When you finish read your work aloud, it will sound different and will help you to hear mistakes you can't see on the page.
10. There's a lot of different types of writing – there are different genres, like crime, memoir, fantasy, romance. There's fiction and non-fiction. There's academic writing. There's poetry and prose, prose poetry, long form, short form, novels, novellas, flash fiction, haiku. No excuse for not writing!