

HOW TO ACTUALLY WRITE YOUR FIRST STORY (WITHOUT IMPLODING)

So, you've signed up, you've had your pep talk, and now comes the bit where you actually... you know... write. **Don't panic, I've got you.** Writing is not about being struck by lightning or waiting for your brain to cough up a polished masterpiece. It's about process, mess, and letting yourself play. **Here's the roadmap:**

1 MULL IT OVER

For the first day or two, just roll the idea around in your brain. Think about it in the shower, while you're walking, or when you should be trying to sleep. Let it simmer. Let it fester (in the good way).

Soon enough, it'll be buzzing at you like, "HELLO, WRITE ME DOWN NOW." That's when you know you're ready.

2 UNLEASH

Sit down and absolutely vomit words onto the page. Don't pause. Don't edit. Don't judge. If your draft looks like:

“And then this happens. And then she walks into the room. And then she gasps because oh my god it's her ex-husband with a knife.”

That's fine. That's more than fine! That's exactly what you're supposed to be doing.

3 REMIND YOURSELF: THIS IS A DRAFT

Draft = messy. Draft = chaos. Draft = you giving your brain permission to dump out the raw material. Your only job at this stage is to *get something down*. Word count doesn't matter. Grammar doesn't matter. Just throw paint at the canvas.

4 CELEBRATE YOUR CHAOS

If you get 300 words in your first sitting, congrats! That's 300 more than zero. You're a writer now!

5 EXPAND THE GOOD STUFF

Once the skeleton is down, then you can go back and start adding flesh. Take “and then she walks into the room” and turn it into:

“She hesitated in the doorway. There was something *off* about the room. A feeling that she wasn’t alone. Then something glinted in the low light, and a figure in front of her began to take shape.”

Watch it play out in your mind. Write down what happens. And *still* don’t panic about getting it perfect, because we aren’t done refining! We’re layering this bad-boy, and we’ll be back to tweak it even more for all those juicy emotional hits.

6 WATCH YOUR WORD COUNT GROW NATURALLY

That scrappy brain-dump of 300 words? By the time you expand and refine, it could easily become 1,000+. You don’t need to hit the magic number in your first go – the words will multiply as you fill in the blanks.

7 TRIM WHERE TRIMMING IS NEEDED

It hurts to cut words out that you’ve poured your heart and soul into, but your work will be better for it. There’s a theory that you should trim out 10% of everything that you write.

8 STEP AWAY

If you feel stuck, take a break. Let your mind chew on it. Some of your best solutions will pop up while brushing your teeth or out driving.

9 READ WITH FRESH EYES

Once you've done your chaos-draft and your tidy-up pass, let it rest. Leave it alone for a night, or even a couple of days if you've got time. Walk away. Distract yourself. Let your brain reset.

Then, when you come back—read it not as the writer, but as the reader. Pretend you don't know what's about to happen. Pay attention to how it *feels*.

- Do you feel the tension where you're supposed to?
- Are you surprised at the right moments?
- Is there anywhere you could drop a little hint at the start to build suspense, or sneak in a misdirect, or weave in an emotional cue so the payoff hits harder?

That's the secret sauce of revision: not just fixing words, but shaping the *experience*.

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TRUST THE PROCESS

Every single writer has been where you are. Even your favourites felt the feelings you're feeling, sat staring at a blank page, wondered if their work was good enough. Your first draft will not be perfect, and (le gasp!) *it doesn't have to be.*

Write, read, refine and learn. You may find your preferred writing process differs from what I've suggested here, and that's absolutely fine, too!

So: mull, unleash, refine, rest, and then re-read like a stranger. That's how you turn nervous brain-chaos into a story that will grab someone by the throat and make them go, "Wow, I felt that."

Now, go make something you'll be proud to call your own.