

Becoming a Successful Writer is Easy

No, seriously. It is.

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I know what you're thinking.

You think I've lost my mind.

Everyone knows that writing is hard work. Really hard.

Just ask Hemingway:

There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.

Or E.B. White:

Writing is hard work and bad for the health.

or Thomas Mann:

A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people.

Hey, dudes. Thanks. That was super helpful.

Okay, so the work of writing is what it is. Hard work.

There's a ton of rejection and a massive learning curve.

So, yeah. It's not easy.

But being a *successful* writer is easy.

Stay with me here.

First, let's talk about what success means.

It means whatever you want it to. Seriously. It's all about perspective.

Don't believe me?

I bet you'd feel successful if an editor from Random House called you up today and offered you a \$10,000 advance.

Do you think Stephen King would feel the same?

Uh huh. See? It's all perspective. And you get to set the rules.

Do this: Decide what being a successful writer looks like for you.

First just let your imagination go wild. Make a list of

everything you think makes a successful writer.

- Published books.
- Maybe *traditionally* published books.
- Advances.
- BIG advances.
- Quitting your day job.
- Movies.
- Netflix/HBO/AMC knocking on your door.
- Target selling the t-shirts.

Whatever. Get it all out of you.

Now think about what you'd REALLY consider success.

And this time, I want you to focus on things you can control. (This is key.)

- Your books published — somehow.
- Having readers. Even a little handful who really love your work.
- Making some money.
- Writing every day.
- Writing 1,000,000 words.
- Writing the *next* 1,000,000 words.

Here's the truth about being a successful writer.

There are a handful of writers who make it to that first list.

A tiny handful. Very tiny. So few that you probably know who most of them are.

But there are thousands of writers who land somewhere on the second list.

You've probably never heard of most of them, but you can be one of them.

It's easy.

Decide what success means to you, and make sure that at least most of the things on that list are things that *you control*.

You can't decide to be a bestseller. You can't decide to be given a million-dollar advance. You can't decide that your book will land a Netflix series.

Or, I mean, you can you want those things. But it doesn't mean anything if you do. All of those things depend nearly entirely on other people.

But you can decide to be part of the itty bitt, teeny tiny percentage of people who *want* to be writers who write their first million words and then keep going — and write their second million.

You can decide to start blogging, so that you can gather your audience to you now. Build your email list. Today. You don't need to wait on some agent or publisher to get

started on that.

Build a big enough audience, by the way, and those book pros might start coming to you. Or not. It won't actually matter, because you won't need them nearly as much as you thought you did.

You can decide to learn how to be a better writer.

You can decide to pursue income streams that support your writing.

You can decide to put your work out into the world and see what happens.

Here's a roadmap for your journey.

A) Follow Ray Bradbury's advice and read a short story, a poem, and an essay every day.

B) Write a million words.

C) Dedicate yourself to making sure those words are on an upward trajectory as far as skill goes. Strive to learn how to write better.

D) Do that by reading a craft book once a month and implementing what you learn.

E) Take a class. Then another one. And so on. Aim for two a year.

F) Go to a conference once a year.

G) Write another million words. The second million are the kicker.

H) When you finish writing something, put it away for a while, then edit it. Revision is key.

I) When you've edited something, send it out. To agents. To publishers. On your blog. Whatever.

J) Start a blog.

K) Blog regularly, about something that's not your own writing.

L) Start an email list. Right now.

M) Email your list twice a month. They asked for it, so stop being scared to connect with them.

N) Read a lot of fiction. In your genre and out of it. Classics and trash. All of it. A book a week is a good starting point. Audio books count, but you need to see how words look in print. Think of this as your apprenticeship.

O) Watch good movies. A lot of them. They're the best lesson you'll ever get in how stories are put together.

P) Watch TV, too. We're in a Golden Age right now. Some of the best writing right now is on television.

There. That should get you started.

I said it was easy. And it is. It all boils down to this:

Write a lot. Read a lot. Take in stories however you can. Learn.

I never said it would be *fast*. It won't be. Even if you're an overnight success.

Give that list a solid try for a decade.

Maybe you'll be a rich and famous bestseller. Maybe you'll be a mid-lister with a career. Or maybe you'll just have a happy life utterly immersed in books and stories.

Any where on that continuum counts as success, if you decide it does.

Then give it a second decade.

I'd tell you to come check back with me then, to talk about next steps. But you won't need me. And you'll be too busy being a successful writer long before a couple of decades is up.

Congratulations in advance!

[Here's my secret weapon for sticking with whatever your thing is.](#)

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place Nevadan living in Northwestern PA with her husband, three superstar kids, two dementia patients, a good friend, Alfred the cat, and a yellow rescue dog named Maybelline Scout. She's on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and is the author of [Viral Nation](#) and [Rebel Nation](#), and [The Astonishing Maybe](#). She is the original [Ninja Writer](#).