

# Writing and the Creative Life: Something is Better Than Nothing

"No matter what you write, good or bad, it's an improvement to a blank page."

[Scott Myers](#)

This is a [quote](#) from Chris Sparling. He is a movie director (*The Atticus Institute*), producer (*Bed Rest*), but mostly he is a screenwriter whose movie credits include *Buried*, *ATM*, and *The Sea of Trees*, plus several other projects in active development.

The sentiment of Chris' observation about writing — that something is better than nothing — is an attitude held by most screenwriters and TV writers I know. Get something down. Then rewrite it.

One great thing about this attitude is it minimizes the influence of fear. Screenwriters and TV writers don't expect perfection in a first draft. That fear is pretty much set off to the side.

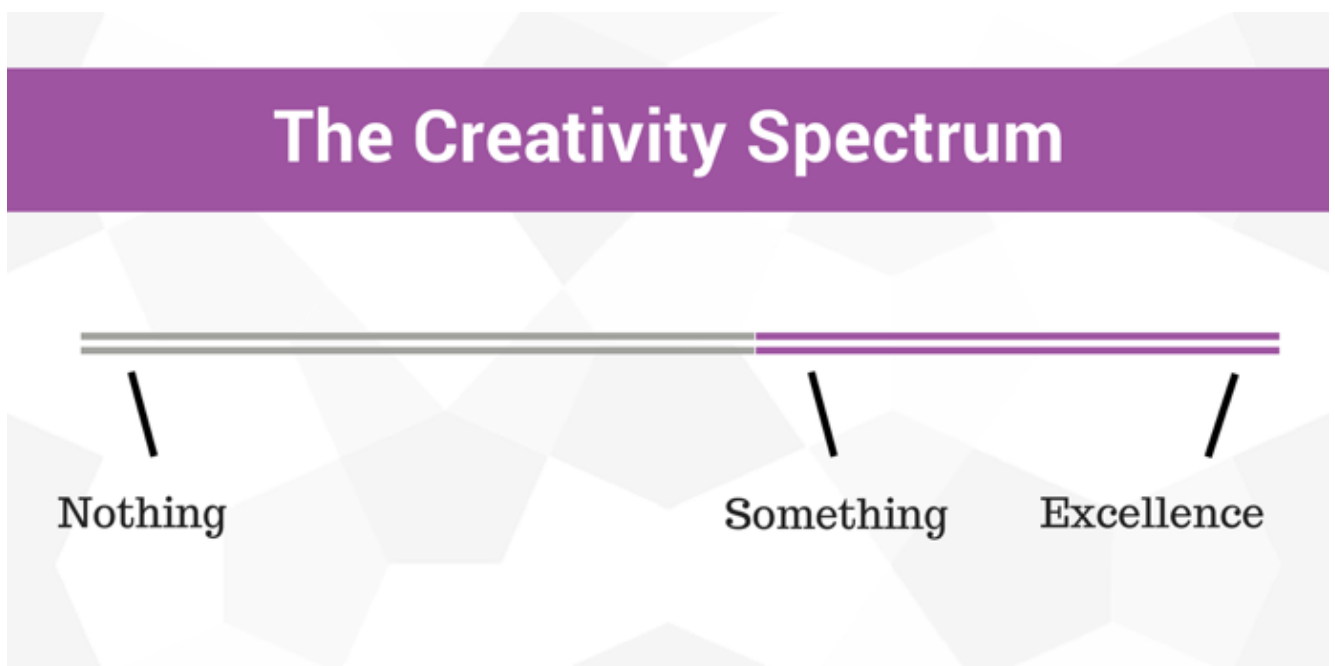
It's a good object lesson for any sort of creative endeavor.

In his book "Cognitive Surplus," author Clay Shirky notes this:

*The stupidest possible creative act is still a creative act. On the spectrum of creative work, the difference between the mediocre and the good is vast. Mediocrity is, however, still on the spectrum; you can move from mediocre to good in increments. **The real gap is between doing nothing and doing something.***

This next thing is better than the current thing.

Kevan Lee at the blog [Buffer](#) came up with something he calls The Creativity Spectrum:



Any spot on that spectrum which is to the right of Nothing puts a writer closer to Excellence. In other words, whatever Something you put down on paper takes you one step closer to a final draft.

To subscribe to this approach, one must overcome the fear which often leads to the creation of Nothing. How to do that? Once again, let's dip into the insights provided by professional screenwriters:

*“That faith, that if you just put the bad, easy version of a scene on the page, the good version will come to you tomorrow. That’s writing.”*

This is a [quote](#) from Justin Marks whose screenwriting credits include the movies *The Jungle Book* and *Top Gun 2*, and the upcoming Starz! TV series Justin created “Counterpart”.

To a screenwriter or TV writer, this concept of “something is better than nothing” isn’t some ethereal or intellectual thing. Rather it is what we do. It’s writing. Get something down on the page, then make it better.

As we bid farewell to one year and welcome the next, let’s all take a tip from screenwriters and TV writers. No matter what creative endeavor we take on in the next 12 months, commit to creating something.

Because something is better than nothing.

For my interview with Chris, go [here](#).

For my interview with Justin, go [here](#).

Twitter: @Justin\_Marks\_, @ChrisSparling.

For more posts in the Writing and the Creative Life series, go [here](#).

*Writing and the Creative Life is an ongoing series in which we explore creativity from the practical to the*

*psychological, the latest in brain science to a spiritual take on the subject. Hopefully the more we understand about our creative self, the better we will become as writers. If you have any good reading material in this vein, please post in comments. If you have a particular observation you think readers will benefit from and you would like to explore in a guest post, email me.*