

Writing and the Creative Life: 19 Daily Habits Of Artists...

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Let go of your idea of "perfect"... Allow yourself to have fun... When in doubt, ask for help... Be prepared to find inspiration in mundane places...



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I don't usually go in for the numeric lists we see floating

around social media with astounding — and sometimes annoying — frequency. You know...

9 Ways You Can Use Your Remote Control to Reinvigorate Your Sex Life

13 Illegal Things You Can Do With a Kumquat

21 Secrets to Making Your Employees' Lives Miserable... While Still Coming Off as a Great Boss

However, occasionally I'll stumble across one that has some real value, like this one: **19 Daily Habits of Artists That Can Help Unlock Your Creativity.**

First off, I've never seen a list based on artists, so that's surprising.

Second, many of these tips are solid advice.

Third, the article features some actual art like this cool painting:



So here are some of the 19 Daily Habits of Artists I thought were particularly relevant to writers:

1. Let go of your idea of "perfect."

"I do have to step back, take a breather, and realize that it is just a project and not the end of the world if it's not perfect." -[Brooklyn-based illustrator and lettering master Mary Kate McDevitt](#)

2. Allow yourself to have fun.

"It is when I find myself playing more than trying that I find my way out of a block." -[New Hampshire-based artist and teacher Aris Moore](#)

6. Find your mantra and keep it close.

"I keep repeating my mantra, a quote by Charles Horton Cooley: 'An artist cannot fail; it is a success to be one.'" -[Germany-based photographer Matthias Heiderich](#)

10. When in doubt, ask for help.

"I could easily go around in endless circles with myself, questioning whether or not I'm on the right track with something. I just have to stop myself, and ask for help." -[Milwaukee-based artist Cassandra Smith](#)

11. And be prepared to find inspiration in mundane places.

"[I find inspiration] at hardware stores, building sites, empty rooms, other people's messes, in good design, conversations, and the time right before I fall asleep." - Austin, Texas-based designer Alyson Fox

15. Don't be afraid to see the adventure in a challenge.

"It's one of the most beautiful things about doing this — you don't have to care... No one can wrestle the pencil out of your hand. You get to keep going in absolute defiance." - [Toronto-based artist Amanda Happe](#)

17. Don't be afraid to alter your process.

"I think it's extremely important to evolve your practice and challenge yourself conceptually and technically. It would soon become tedious otherwise." - [Adelaide, Australia-based artist Deidre But-Husaim](#)

Here is my personal favorite:

19. Because creation can come from destruction.

"If I'm having trouble with a textile or paper piece, I always cut it up. I love cutting things up. It restores the potential to the materials again." - [Ontario-based artist Jessica Bell](#)

There is so much pressure on writers, primarily self-imposed... to get it done, do it right, make it work, sell it, and

the biggie — BE SUCCESSFUL! As motivation, these may help spur one's creative process.

However if that is all there is, it leaves little room for error and mistakes. And oftentimes as we develop and write stories, we can only discover the way that works by exploring ways that do not work.

If the pressure we feel to be successful is so powerful, it overrides our willingness to venture down every path, even those that seem bound to fail, or refuse to give up what we have even if we know it is not quality writing, we may end up short circuiting our creative process and never discover the fullest and best expression of our story.

A case in point creation can emerge from destruction, consider *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Here is the Wikipedia entry about Tolkien's writing process:

Persuaded by his publishers, he started "a new Hobbit" in December 1937. After several false starts, the story of the One Ring emerged. The idea for the first chapter ("A Long-Expected Party") arrived fully formed, although the reasons behind Bilbo's disappearance, the significance of the Ring, and the title The Lord of the Rings did not arrive until the spring of 1938. Originally, he planned to write a story in which Bilbo had used up all his treasure and was looking for another adventure to gain more; however, he remembered the Ring and its powers and thought that

would be a better focus for the new work. As the story progressed, he also brought in elements from 'The Silmarillion' mythology.

Writing was slow, because Tolkien had a full-time academic position, and needed to earn further money as a university examiner. Tolkien abandoned The Lord of the Rings during most of 1943 and only re-started it in April 1944, as a serial for his son Christopher Tolkien, who was sent chapters as they were written while he was serving in South Africa with the Royal Air Force. Tolkien made another concerted effort in 1946, and showed the manuscript to his publishers in 1947. The story was effectively finished the next year, but Tolkien did not complete the revision of earlier parts of the work until 1949. The original manuscripts, which total 9,250 pages, now reside in the J.R.R. Tolkien Collection at Marquette University.

That phrase — “several false starts” — if I recall correctly, Tolkien started a draft, wrote some 200 pages, then scrapped the story. He went at it again and wrote around 500 pages — and scrapped that version, too. It took the third attempt — and many years — before Tolkien discovered the story he wanted to famously write... only after destroying two previous iterations.

A good lesson to remember for our writing: “Because creation can come from destruction.”

For the entire list, go [here](#).

Which ones resonate the most with you?

Writing and the Creative Life is a weekly 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.

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