

TOP TIPS FOR WRITERS

We often get asked for tips about writing and we always reply that there is no correct way of writing a story - everybody has a different way that will work for them. Here are some tips for you that might work - they certainly do for us!

The first three tips that we can give are:

1. Read lots!
2. Write lots!
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2, again and again and....

EXTRA TOP TIP!!

Write about what you know about!

Lots of people write about blowing up the Earth or zombie zapping aliens from outer space. This is a problem:

- You don't know how to blow up the Earth. If you did you'd have probably done it already by accident!
- You don't know any zombie zapping aliens from outer space (parents and teachers don't count, obviously!)

You are the expert about you. It is better to base your stories on real life experiences. Everyone has got an interesting story to tell. It could be: something scary, something funny, something embarrassing (like the time you dived into the swimming pool and your trunks fell off...) something sad. Because you were experiencing the event, you will be able to recall the sights or how you felt at the time. You can use this information as a base for your writing.

We use lots of our experiences in our stories.

Chapter 1 of *Must Fly!* is based on something that happened to Steve Skidmore when he was 14. He tried to show off to loads of girls by diving into a swimming pool from a 10 metre high diving board. Unfortunately, he belly flopped! OW!

PLANNING STORIES

Some writers don't plan their stories, they just begin writing and see where it takes them. Because we write books together, we have to plan our stories very carefully. We have to go through several stages before we get a story "just right".

STAGE 1

TALK - Get your ideas flowing!

Find a writing buddy!

Share your ideas with someone - your friend, your parents, your teacher (not your pet hamster, 'cos they won't be able to give you feedback, just run around on their wheel).

BRAINSTORM - Put your ideas down on paper

This helps you to answer all the questions you will need to answer, to write a good story.

WHO are the characters in the story?

WHERE does the story take place?

WHEN did the story take place?

WHAT happens in the story?

WHY did it happen? Why do the characters behave like they do?

Fill in the answers to these questions.

STAGE 2

PLAN - Put your ideas in order

We now need to put the brainstorm into order to help our story to flow.

All stories have distinct parts. For simplicity, we'll call them:

Beginning - Middle - Ending

Write these down, leaving a good space between them. You are going to transfer your ideas from the brainstorm to this plan.

Where should you start planning your story? The beginning?

We start planning our stories from the end!

Are we mad? No, well maybe a little, BUT...

Think of a story like a car journey. You don't often get in a car and not know where you're going! You know your destination. You know where you're heading for. It's much the same with our stories - we like to know where we're going. Then we don't end up writing **THE WORLD'S WORST ENDING!** "And then I woke up and it was all a dream!"

Most people write this because they are bored with the story and want to end it. If you are bored with the story, just think what the reader is going to be!

The ending will be the climax of the story - the most important part. For example if it is a murder mystery story, the ending is usually when the murderer is revealed. Once you have decided what the end is going to be, write down the things that happen.

Then go back to the beginning. Remember, telling a story is like a journey and you usually know from where you are setting off!

You will usually use the **WHO**, **WHERE** and **WHEN** part of the brainstorm.

This helps you to set the context of the story.

STAGE 3

WRITE THE STORY - Filling in the plan

Now just fill in the gaps in your plan to tell your story!

Tips:

Have a snappy opening sentence to get the reader interested.

Use interesting similes and metaphors.

Take your time telling the story - don't rush it!

Use a mixture of dialogue and prose.

STAGE 4

RE-DRAFT - Making your story just right

No one gets a story right first time!

Ask someone to read through the story and tell you what they think.

(Don't get annoyed with what they might say - it might be good advice!)

Redraft your story, bearing in mind their comments or any further ideas you may wish to put in.

Don't forget to check your spellings and punctuation.

Tip:

You might have to redraft the story more than once. Our record is 9 redrafts for a 35,000 word book!

STAGE 5

PRESENTATION - Making the story look good

Present your story in the best way possible.

Ideas for presentation

Word-process the story, or write it up in your best handwriting.

Have a title page.

Illustrate the story.