# THE ROAD TO WRITINGBY JUDY HOWARD

## **Have You Ever Thought of Writing a book?**

# THE TOOLS FOR THE ROAD TO WRITING

## pen or pencil

## paper & notebook

## no eraser!

## computer & lots of ink cartridges

## microsoft office

## the internet

# TIME AND DISCIPLINE

## Time the essential ingredient an aspiring author must possess to travel the deceptively smooth Road to Writing.

## In order to succeed a writer MUST write every day. EVERY DAY.

## In order to reach your goal – your destination - In any career, any business plan, one must be steadfast.

## Passion and long hours are the spine of a hard backed profession.

# MORE ABOUT TIME & DISCIPLINE

## **READ ALOUD**

####  Your ears need to hear what you have written.

####  Listening, you will hear “the flow” of what you have written.

####  Is the sentence too long? Does it make sense?

####  How many times did you use the passive verbs such as ”was”?

## **EDIT**

####  You will always find something needing change after you read aloud.

####  Make the changes.

####  Writing is rewriting.

### **READ ALOUD**

####  Read aloud again.

# FRIENDS AND PATIENCE

## Friends comprise the fuel for the road, the spice for the soup, one of the final ingredients to your soup of words that you will simmer slowly over the months as you travel on the Road of Writing.

## Ask your friends - friends to read what you write and offer honest criticism. They will critique your work and, humbled by their suggestions, you will rewrite.

## Ask your friends, once again, to read what you have rewritten and they, being the good friends they are will critique again, and you will rewrite, again and again and again.

## Patience is required because writing is rewriting.

## Beware!! Some words you have written you will have fallen in love with and do not want to change.

# MORE ABOUT FRIENDS AND PATIENCE

## **EDIT AGAIN**

## **READ TO A FRIEND**

#####  **Be brave.** Let someone else judge your writing.

##### Ask them;

##### Does it make sense?

##### Does it “flow”?

##### How’s the grammar?

##### Can they “see” the character or the scene?

##### How did it affect them?

## **EDIT AGAIN!**

##### Guess what. Edit again!!

##### Complete this process over and over again until it “feels right.”

# SOMETIMES YOU GET STUCK

## WRITING PROMPTS

## Today I’m not going to…….

## I’ll never do that because….

## At the store, I ……

## Write about pencils, or soup, or bunnies.

## READ A GOOD BOOK

##  A good book will inspire you.

## In the process you will learn what makes a good story.

# SOMETIMES YOU GET STUCK

## PAY ATTENTION

## Everywhere you go, everyone you see.

## Standing in line at the bank, how would you describe the person in front of you? Notice the Details.

## What makes this place or person different from the next?

## TAKE NOTES

## Always carry a memo pad and pencil.

## In the car, at the bedside, waiting for the dentist.

## TAKE A BREAK

## Sometimes you are just too close.

## Physical exercise is the best break – a walk in the hills will clear your mind.

## A good movie is like a good book.

## Clean house – anything to pull your mind away from your writing.

# REMEMBER IF YOU GET STUCK …

## Our most brilliant ideas come in a flash, but the flash comes only after a lot of hard work. Nobody gets a big idea when he is not relaxed, and nobody gets a big idea when he’s relaxed all the time.

# WHEN DID YOU GET YOUR BEST IDEAS?

## Did they happen:

## While you were in the shower?

## During a walk?

## On your way to work?

## Just before bed?

## What do all these situations have in common? You’re *not* in front of your computer staring at the blank page.

# With writing block out of the way you are free to arrive at your DESTINATION – taste the fruits of your labor.

## Writing bits and pieces becomes whatever you want it to be. A book or a memoir is the sum of a series of events, characters, or places.

## **MEMOIRS**

## **BOOK**

## **BLOGS**

## **MAGAZINE ARTICLES**

## **HOW TO BOOKS**

## **POETRY**

# WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

## Story is NOT about what happens.

##### A natural disaster, a crime, a miracle

## Story is about people.

##### The people in the town

#####  The victims, the criminals

#####  The people who need a miracle

## Story is about what people do when something happens.

##### Do they rally together?

##### Do they fall apart, grow bitter?

##### Do they deny what happened?

# TIPS TO EFFECTIVE WRITING

## **SHOW, DON’T TELL**

## He felt angry.

#### Instead, “–”His blood pulsed, he slammed the door

#### SHOW, DON’T TELL

#### He saw the accident.

#### Instead, “His mouth dropped open, he ran towards the twisted pile of metal.”

#### SHOW, DON’T TELL

#### He thought about …

#### Instead, use dialogue to find out what your character is thinking.

# MORE TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVELY

#### Use active verbs

####  Instead of, “She walked to the store…,”

####  Say she trod, plodded, or skipped to the store.

#### Avoid passive verbs

####  Such as was, is, been, etc.

####  Instead of “She was a good employee.”

####  Say, “She arrived on time, ate her lunch at her desk…

#### ”

# MORE TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVELY

#### Avoid abstract words

##### Instead of pretty, ugly, love, hate…

##### Show these through actions, dress, habits…

##### Pretty is in the eyes of the beholder so be specific.

#### Use the senses

##### Instead of the house smelled good.

##### Say, “The scent of pine tingled his nostrils as he entered.”

##### Describe the smell, the sound, the weather and how your character reacts to it.

# BUILDING A CHARACTER

## All books are about people.

## A character is:

#### What he says.

#### Who he says it to.

#### And how he says it.

#### Dialogue builds character.

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE

## Many times conflict is gradual.

###### The story begins with a sense of unease. (Jaws)

###### Your main character sees her husband at lunch with her girlfriend.

## As events happen, the sense of unease increases.

###### Then she sees them sitting too close together in a cab.

## The protagonist must attempt to overcome the conflict.

##### The protagonist‘s jealousy drives her husband into her girlfriends arms.

## Usually the first attempt makes the conflict worse.

##### The protagonist has an affair too to make her husband jealous.

# THE SECRET OF PLOTTING A STORYLINE

## PLOT IS THE WRITER’S CHOICE OF EVENTS TO TELL THE STORY OF THE CHARACTER’S PROGRESSION TOWARD A GOAL OR A DESIRE.

## The plot must be composed of a series of conflicts – inner, (Pretty Woman), personal, or external (Jaws). (The Wizard Of Oz)

## .

## The protagonist must *fail* many times before succeeding.

## The protagonist’s story is only as interesting as the antagonist makes it. The more daunting the enemy the better the story.

# THE WORLD OF PUBLISHING

## AGENTS –

## 1. An agent’s job is to find you a publisher

## 2 Agents specialize in certain genres.

## PUBLISHERS

## 1. Publishers buy the rights to your book.

## 2. THEY PAY YOU. YOU DO NOT PAY THEM!

## 3. You are not guaranteed sales.

## QUERY LETTERS

## A synopsis and promotional letter to an agent or a publisher.

## SELF PUBLISHING

## You publish, own, and market your book.

## With Createspace.com this can be done at NO COST to you, or you may buy services, such as cover design, editing, etc.

## MARKETING

## Blogging, Facebook, and Twitter

## Book Signings

## Amazon, Kindle

## Magazines, Newspapers, Libraries

# GREAT WEBSITES, CLUBS, & GROUPS

## WEBSITES

### DAILY WRITING TIPS.COM

### WRITERS DIGEST.COM

### CREATESPACE.COM

### K.M. WEILAND.COM

### THE INTERNET WRITING WORKSHOP.ORG

###

### CLUBS

### ROMANCE WRITERS

### SISTERS IN CRIME

### CALFORNIA WRITERS GROUP

## GYPSY JOURNAL RV.COM

## INTERNET WRITING WORKSHOP

## A LOCAL WRITING GROUP

# JOIN A LOCAL OR ON-LINE WRITING GROUP

## Writing critique groups bring authors together to share their successes, weaknesses, and strengths. Most clubs have authors at every level of accomplishment so you don’t need to feel intimidated.

## If you cannot find a club or a writing group that suits your needs, start your own group. Writing groups become an intimate structure and each has its own personality. Find one that fits.

# HAPPY TRAILS TO YOU ON YOUR ROAD TO WRITING!

# 5 Tips on How to Run a Writing Group

## You’ve got your writing group up and running. All the hard work’s over, right?

## Wrong. Just like any smooth-running machine, a writing group requires maintenance. Here are some tips for tender, loving care:

## TIP #1. Construct Criticism

## Model proactive and up-front critiquing etiquette. Advise everyone to start positive with a compliment, then offer honest but objective, well-supported, and practical advice, and then conclude with another commendation. Continuously reinforce the message that no one is served when criticism is withheld; only focused, writing-centered (not writer-centered) commentary will help the writer grow.

# How to Run a Writing Group – CONT’D.

## TIP #2. Vary the Routine

## Some people might be ready to email a writing sample a week ahead of time to give others a chance to read and critique before the next meeting. Those selections don’t need to be read aloud before the group; you can go straight to discussion. (Hand the writer an annotated hard copy or return by email, with inserted notes, the file they sent you.)

# TIP #2 – CONT’D.

## Others can pass around copies of a cold read and read it aloud while others jot down notes, then go to discussion. Yet others might simply read a shorter passage for a moment’s worth of specific advice, ask a few general questions without reading at all, or pass altogether that week, participating only in discussion about others’ work. (You may not have time to go over every group member’s project at each meeting anyway.) But don’t let any one member get away with following the same routine every time.

# TIP #2– CONT’D.

## Suggest a writing session every now and then: Everybody comes to the meeting, writes for an hour, then convenes to take turns reading part or all of their resulting selection for five minutes and getting one minute of feedback from each member.

# How to Run a Writing Group – CONT’D.

## 3. Do Your Homework

## Establish expectations for criticism: When you read the writing of other group members, take notes, writing down questions, suggestions, and compliments. Be specific when you critique, praising a vivid description in particular or recommending more character development with detailed advice.

# TIP #3 – CONT’D.

## Focus, however, not on telling others what to do but on asking questions to help *them* decide what to do. If you don’t understand something, or you feel that details are lacking, ask for an explanation or background information. Then, gently advise the author to incorporate their response into the narrative.

## Your homework also involves setting your ego aside and acting on others’ critiques. What’s the use of investing so much time and energy in this process if you don’t take feedback to heart?

# How to Run a Writing Group – CONT’D.

## 4. TAKE A BREAK

## At regular intervals, step back from the critiquing cycle to meet just to advise or brainstorm about how to organize notes, do research, or work on character, plot, tone, and so on. Several times a year, go to a book reading together, or watch a movie or a play together and, for homework, draft a “novelization” or a rewrite of a scene and bring it to the next meeting. Compile a list of prompts for when members hit the wall.

# How to Run a Writing Group – CONT’D.

## 5. Check In

## Periodically evaluate how the group is going. Are your meetings too often, not often enough, or just right? Too long, not long enough, or ideal? Is someone missing too many meetings or wall-flowering, or does one person dominate them? Is everybody getting what they want out of the experience?

# TIP #5 – CONT’D.

## What’s the procedure when somebody’s not fitting in? What do you do when one or more members drop out, or one or more members feel like increasing the number of people in the group? How do you recruit, and how do you decide whether to accept candidates? Establish and review your membership policies.

## Above all, remember that although the group is a democratic body that should operate by consensus, you, as the founder, must continue to moderate the proceedings and nudge everyone to always honor its principles and purposes.