

Top 10 Ways to Become a Better Writer

Guide Picks



From [Niko Silvester](#),
Your Guide to [Creative Writing for Teens](#).
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If you're going to write, you might as well become the best writer you can be. Improving your writing is something you can do your entire life; in fact, if you keep writing, you can't help but improve. Still, there are strategies you can use to work on your writing, and ten of those strategies are listed below. The first two are ones every writer should do no matter what (if you don't do the first, you're not a writer at all!). The rest involve varying degrees of effort, but all are useful.

1) [Write](#)

Almost every working writer will tell you the same thing: to get better at writing, you just have to write. It's simple, but true. If you want to be a better basketball player, you play a lot of basketball. If you want to be a good musician, you make a lot of music. Gradually you get better. It's called practice, and it works even for writing. So, the single best way to become a better writer is to write. Write as much as you can. Write stories or poems, do writing exercises, compose essays. More: [writing exercises](#)

2) [Read](#)

Next in importance to writing is reading. After trying to do something yourself, the best way to learn how to do something is to watch someone who knows what they're doing. For learning better writing, this means reading. Read for pleasure first, but then go back and read to see how the writer did things, how they achieved mood or atmosphere, how they made their characters come alive, how they held your attention. Even reading "bad" writing is helpful. How else will you learn how NOT to write?

More: [the importance of reading](#)

3) [Observe](#)

One of the most useful skills for writers is that of observation. How many times have you done a routine task and not really been aware of exactly how you did it? Would you be able to write about that task with vivid detail? As you go through life, learn to pay attention to the things around you. Observe the way things look, and how their appearance can change in different light. Observe the sounds and smells and flavours around you. Be aware of how mood can affect which details you notice.

More: [writing with all five senses](#)

4) [Experience](#)

Things are easier to write about if you have experienced them (or something similar) first hand. Instead of staying in your room writing all the time, go out once in a while and experience life. Try new things. Do the usual things a different way. Every different experience you have gives you more material to write about, whether it's a new hobby you've taken up, or a new way of thinking about the world. Live a little yourself, and you'll bring more life to your stories and poems.

More: [reality may not be good fiction](#)

5) [Research](#)

They say to write what you know. It's good advice, but it doesn't mean you must never tackle what you don't know. It means that if you don't know about the topic you want to write on, go out and learn--MAKE it something you know. Number 4, above, is one way of expanding what you

know; research is another. But don't just research the next thing you want to write about--research anything that interests you. You never know where you might find that truly great story idea.

More: [questions to ask your characters](#)

6) [Vocabulary](#)

Writers use words, obviously. So a good way to expand your writing range (and eventually improve your writing) is to expand your vocabulary. This requires some moderation, though. You don't want to go out and learn a whole bunch of fancy new words and use them all at once. It's always a good idea to limit your new word use at first, until you become truly comfortable with your vocabulary. And don't neglect ordinary words--we don't use every common word we know, but we could.

More: [build your vocabulary](#)

7) [Grammar](#)

Another obvious way to better writing is through better grammar, but it's a path many are reluctant to follow. It may be because grammar is seen as boring and technical, the very opposite of creativity. You may not believe me, but grammar can actually be fun. And you know that saying "you can't break the rules unless you know them"? It works for writing, too. Once you know how grammar works, then you'll suddenly have the power to manipulate it to work for you. You can't do that with bad grammar.

More: [active and passive voice](#)

8) [Play](#)

Once in a while, it's good to set aside serious work, and just have fun. Write some things that aren't meant for an audience. Try out all those new words you've been learning, see how far you can twist grammar without mangling it beyond recognition, or try out a new figure of speech. Try playing with structure--what if you wrote a story that began at the end and ended at the beginning? Try a new form of poetry (ever written a sestina?) or make up your own. Play is when discoveries are made.

More: [figurative language](#)

9) [Read Aloud](#)

A really good way to figure out how the words are flowing is to read something out loud. You don't need an audience, and it doesn't matter if you don't intend the work to be heard out loud ever again. Most readers actually read to themselves in their heads; it's how we can talk about the "sound" of words on a page. If you stumble over the words when reading out loud, your readers will probably stumble too. Plus, you'll notice things like alliteration that you might miss otherwise.

More: [show don't tell?](#)

10) [Edit](#)

Sometimes it seems that in writing, the true art is in the editing. While a first draft may have great energy or emotion, it will also have lots of mistakes. Typos and grammatical errors are the most obvious things that need fixing, but sometimes editing is more than that. Perhaps you used the same phrase too often, or your wording gives too much away and spoils the suspense (or isn't clear enough). And sometimes the core of a story is good, but the entire structure needs to be redone.

More: [editing fiction](#)