

How can I train myself to become a good writer?

By Gail Grenier Sweet ©2006

1. To be a writer is to be awake. Be curious. Develop a “nose for news.”
2. Eat healthy foods (a balanced diet).
3. Get enough sleep.
4. Get some exercise every day. Walking works wonders.
5. Decide that you will master the English language. Learn to swim in the language.
6. Speak clearly — say what you mean.
7. Listen carefully — hear what others really say.
8. Think logically and without prejudices — have an open mind.
9. Take accurate notes that you can understand. Develop your own “shorthand.”
10. Read, read, read... books, magazines, comics, cereal boxes, everything.
11. Learn to spell correctly. Pay attention as you read. Use Spell check.
12. Learn proper punctuation. Pay attention as you read.
13. Think, speak, and write with correct grammar.
14. Learn to outline ideas logically on paper. Use any system that works for you.
15. Be brief.
16. Be simple.
17. Be clear.
18. Develop your vocabulary. But use the simplest word that expresses the idea best.
19. Be honest. Tell the truth. Check your facts. Never steal the words of others.
20. Be proud. Never write anything you wouldn't want your parents to read (even in e-mail).
21. Be complete: answer the 5 W's and H (who, what, where, when, why, and how).
22. Learn to type.
23. Rewrite. Read your writing out loud and see if it sounds good.

* To understand points #2, 3, and 4, imagine how you'd feel after typing for four or six hours.

Common writing pitfalls to avoid:

- overdramatizing (exaggerating)
- corniness (soap opera writing)
- wordiness
- personal opinion writing with no facts or proof

Benefits of being a writer:

- meet interesting people
- learn new things
- many jobs possible (public relations, TV/radio announcing, advertising, newspaper and magazine reporting, freelance writing, writing for stage and screen, etc.!)

fun of seeing your name in print
possible fame and fortune (but don't count on it!)

The End