

When working on your first book, you're faced with an extremely daunting task. Regardless of whatever training or practice you've had in the past, it's still your first novel. At times it will be a highly enjoyable venture, but much of it will be excruciating. There are moments where you might want to throw in the towel, or where you'll feel completely lost. And when that happens just remember the wise words of the successful authors below — they hold the roadmap back to finishing your novel successfully.

**1. "The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas." - Linus Pauling**

As a writer, this is square one. It doesn't matter how gorgeous your prose is or how smooth your dialogue flows if you don't have an idea in the first place. Coming up with ideas isn't necessarily easy, but the best way to catch a big fish is to cast a wide net. And the beauty of ideas is that you can get them from literally everywhere. Every place you go, every person you interact with, and everything you read can contribute to your idea pool. Once that's full all you have to do is pick through your net until you find the winner. That's when you put pen to paper.

**2. "In nearly all good fiction, the basic — all but inescapable — plot form is this: A central character wants something, goes after it despite opposition (perhaps including his own doubts), and so arrives at a win, lose, or draw." - John Gardner**

There's a lot of talk about the importance of being original when you write, but there's something more important to keep in mind. At the end of the day, every story is the same. Someone/thing is trying to do something/one and there's an obstacle. They either overcome it in some form or don't — then the story is over. People have tried to mix up the formula in the past but very rarely are those endeavors successful. There's no need to reinvent the wheel, though, because this structure has worked for thousands of years. Don't anticipate that to change when you wake up tomorrow.

**3. "Begin with an individual, and before you know it you have created a type; begin with a type, and you find you have created — nothing." - F. Scott Fitzgerald**

The first entry talked about ideas, and new writers often confuse idea with plot. Now, it's all well and good if you thought of this crazy catastrophe that you've never seen done before, but it doesn't mean shit if your audience doesn't care about who it affects. Just take another look at the previous quote and re-read what it says about good fiction: it's about a central character. The problem (and challenge) is that you can't just pull some random stereotype out of pop culture and plop them into your story. Readers are going to see through that one dimension right away, because readers deal with real people every day. They know that real people are complex — so make your characters complex individuals. That may not be easy to do, but it is essential. So don't skimp on the complexities.

**4. "Resist the temptation to try to use dazzling style to conceal weakness of substance." - Stanley Schmidt**

Some writers hone their own voice through imitation. That kind of practice results in the writer picking up a lot of little technical tricks along the way. Those tricks — malleable diction, variable syntax, a long list of handy literary techniques — are great things to have in your back pocket, and they're often crucial to setting yourself apart from the rest of the pack. The thing is, they aren't going to culminate into a voice of your own. A voice develops by itself over time, and no amount of tricks will speed that process up.

**5. "People on the outside think there's something magical about writing, that you go up in the attic at midnight and cast the bones and come down in the morning with a story, but it isn't like that. You sit in back of the typewriter and you work, and that's all there is to it." - Harlan Ellison**

Some new writers are confused and discouraged when their story doesn't just flow out of their fingertips. They'll see others pumping books out like crazy and even doing well with many of them. And it wasn't *that* hard to come up with the idea after a few months of planning. Why, then, are others hitting their groove while you're not? That's because they haven't hit some kind of magic groove — they're busy grinding stories out. The only way to write a story is to keep writing. There aren't any short cuts.

**6. "Books aren't written, they're rewritten. Including your own. It is one of the hardest things to accept, especially after the seventh rewrite hasn't quite done it..." - Michael Crichton**

You didn't think you'd only have to write your book once, did you? Not a single book comes to mind that's been published after a single draft, and that's because no one is that good. Even if you do manage to sell a manuscript on your first draft, it will be edited by the publishers. So save everyone the time and just work on it until you get it right. That might take a lot of drafts too, so dig in for the long haul.

**7. "The reason 99% of all stories written are not bought by editors is very simple. Editors never buy manuscripts that are left on the closet shelf at home." - John Campbell**

This is probably the hardest thing for a new writer to come to terms with, and every writer has hidden the bulk of their work from everyone for fear of embarrassing themselves. That's perfectly fine and not every story is worth sharing with anyone. Still, you'll eventually have to get over that embarrassment and show someone something — and not just someone, but actual agents or publishers. Hell, even if you skip that and go the self-publishing route, your readers are going to see the story, right? So just rip off the Band-Aid and start sharing with those you trust. Even if the story isn't ready.

**8. "Engrave this in your brain: EVERY WRITER GETS REJECTED. You will be no different." - John Scalzi**

You're probably going to get rejected a lot, too. Most people do. The market is so saturated that even a good story can get overlooked among the dross. Just refuse to take no for a final answer. You'll get there one day.

**9. "Only a person with a Best Seller mind can write Best Sellers." - Aldous Huxley**

Not everyone wants to be a best-selling author and that's perfectly okay. But for those of you that dream about it, you absolutely need to be confident. If you talk about your book like it's not the next great American (or whatever literature-rich country you hail from) novel, there's a good chance it won't even come close. That doesn't mean you should go around running your mouth about how awesome you are, but you should be proud of what you've done. If you've written what you think is a best-selling novel, say so. If you don't even believe in your story, why would anyone else?

**10. "Writing isn't generally a lucrative source of income; only a few, exceptional writers reach the income levels associated with the best-sellers. Rather, most of us write because we can make a modest living, or even supplement our day jobs, doing something about which we feel passionately. Even at the worst of times, when nothing goes right, when the prose is clumsy and the ideas feel stale, at least we're doing something that we genuinely love. There's no other reason to work this hard, except that love." - Melissa Scott**

This one kind of explains itself, but it's arguably the most important piece of advice on this list. Never forget that you write because you love it. Even if you never make a penny from your stories, remember that's not what matters. If you do that, you'll definitely make it to the end of at least one novel one day.

**11. "It is the writer who might catch the imagination of young people, and plant a seed that will flower and come to fruition." - Isaac Asimov**

Remember when you were young and a particular book made you want to write? And even if the bug didn't bite you until later in life, no writer decided to write without loving to read first. That aside, the point is to keep in mind the effect your story can have on those that read it. Whether they're young or old, you can really change the course of someone else's life. Even if your book isn't lauded by the world as a literary revolution, you might inspire the person that does write such an acclaimed story. And for sci-fi writers, who knows? One day some of your ideas might become a reality because someone read your novel and couldn't rest until the ideas were real.

**12. "There are three rules for writing. Unfortunately, no one can agree what they are." - Somerset Maugham**

Last but not least, some advice that potentially negates all the rest. Everyone is going to have their own opinion on the best way to write and it's rare that everyone agrees on everything. So while it's good to keep the words of the successful in mind, don't feel stupid if you disagree. The only one who can say a particular way of writing works for you is yourself. And hey, if you manage to succeed in spite of what all the above authors have said, write us an email. We could probably stand to add you to this list

