

WRITER'S TOOLKIT

8 Steps to Get People to Take You Seriously as a Writer

1. Practice saying "I am a writer" into a mirror.

Say it until you can say it without sounding tentative. Too many writers describe their profession almost apologetically. A writer can have a profound impact on cultural understanding, communication, and spark social change. Those are important things, and not to be sneered at. So step up and be proud. You aren't a writer because it's some kind of training ground for "real writing." You're a writer because it's an important, valuable art form.



2. Carve out your own spot.

Set up your writer's desk and defend the spot. Don't use it for paying bills, menu preparation, kid homework, etc. Make it your work area and keep it special. Having a special spot will help you mentally be prepared to work when you settle in your spot. It will also tell the family that you're serious enough about your work that you give it physical territory and you defend it.

3. Write everyday (or as close as you can.)

You may easily not be able to write much every day. Writers are notorious for having to squeeze writing into an already killer schedule, but try to make yourself jot notes, make an outline, brainstorm some story plots (which can go on index cards for a time when you can write at length.) Once you can tell people that you write every day, you will be amazed at how much more they respect you and you respect yourself.

4. Get something published now.

Many writers focus on the book. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be a book author, but consider trying some smaller writing projects for magazines or online publishers. The initial boost of getting anything published and paid for will give you more confidence and credibility to the scoffers. Activities, puzzles, and recipes are also great tiny projects for those days when you don't have time for "real" writing.

5. Invest in your writing.

Read writing books (you may be able to get some through interlibrary loan and not spend money until you have a chance to read the book once.) Try to attend one writing conference a year. Take a class. We tend to value those places where we put our money, so put a bit on your writing.

6. Pursue improvement vigorously.

Join a critique group. Read, read, read critically in the genre that interests you as a writer. Network with other writers. Professionals never stop learning, so adopt a professional attitude toward your writing by polishing your skills every day.

7. Protect your work.

Don't discuss your writing with people that you know will not be supportive. The internet is a great place to connect with other writers in your specific interest area. Search them out so you have someplace to rejoice and commiserate. Don't expect everyone to understand your writing, not everyone would understand your struggles or triumphs if you were a nuclear physicist or an auto mechanic either. The lack of understanding from others does not define your writing, you do.

8. Enjoy the process.

As a society, we tend to be product driven, thinking it is the end result that counts. It cannot be that way in any artistic pursuit. If you don't take time to enjoy the process (the birth of the idea, the struggle to raise it into a mature story, and the endless revisions) you will experience so much frustration that you eventually give up. Learn to relish each step of the creation. Your joy and your dedication will close the mouths of many naysayers. Don't give up.

