

Get Over Yourself and Write!

By Curtis Jerry Smothers

WHY IT MATTERS
What you write is an external product of an internal process. The question is: Which is more important—the product or the process?
Give higher priority to the product. Dedicate the process to the reader.

GETTING PAST THE "FALSE START"
Half-written starts are often mistaken for writer's block. Don't quit—plan! Follow the architect's process. Leave Utopia behind and build something real.

THE WRITER'S COMPROMISE
Talent is your voice. Conformity is the bridge to understanding. Great writing balances both.

MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION
INDIVIDUALITY (TALENT) Your voice
CONFORMITY (CRAFT) Your reader

CLARITY OF THOUGHT, KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING
Map the process in your head or on paper. Hemingway outlined. He also said, "The first draft is crap."

TECHNICAL FLAWLESSNESS
Follow the rules of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and syntax. Then break the rules creatively—with purpose.

THE PLANNING PROCESS TRUMPS WRITER'S BLOCK
Brainstorm. Outline. Organize. Know your destination before you begin the journey.

WRITING IS MORE THAN BELLY-BUTTON GAZING
Drop the ego. Connect with readers. Good writing is craftsmanship in service of others.

CONCLUSION
Writing connects. It preserves. It puts your out-of-body experience into words others can feel and understand. So, get over yourself. Start writing from the reader.

THE WRITER'S ROADMAP TO BETTER WRITING

- 1. THINK DEEPLY**
Seek ideas. Question. Observe. Imagine. Let ideas simmer.
- 2. PLAN WISELY**
Brainstorm. Take notes. Outline. Know your audience and purpose.
- 3. WRITE WITH PURPOSE**
Craft your message with clarity, structure, and focus on the reader.
- 4. REVISE RELENTLESSLY**
Refine. Cut the clutter. Polish. Make every word earn its place.
- 5. RESPECT THE READER**
Make it clear. Make it useful. Make it worth their time.

THE BOTTOM LINE
Good writers blend talent, skill, inspiration, and relentless regard for the reader. If we're not our own best critic, the reader will be. Make it count.

THE WRITER'S CHECKLIST
☒ Clarity of thought
☒ Solid planning
☒ Strong structure
☒ Craftsmanship
☒ Respect the reader

Remember:
The reader is why you write.

FROM THINKING TO WRITING
 • Rehearse
 • Brainstorm
 • Take Notes
 • Build Writing Pressure
 • Plan Your Route

A CLEAR PLAN PREVENTS WRITER'S BLOCK AND FALSE STARTS.

Good writing is a bridge from your mind to the reader's.

PLAN. WRITE. REVISE. RESPECT THE READER.

Your words matter.

WRITE WITH PURPOSE. WRITE WITH CLARITY. WRITE WITH THE READER IN MIND.

"Getting over yourself" in the context of writing is the simple recognition that what you write is an external product of an internal process. It is mostly a matter of knowing which is more important: the product or the process.

The writer who gives higher priority to the product can dedicate the process to the reader and make the unselfish transition from thinking to writing.

The transition from thinking to writing can be as simple as "rehearsing" the writing in one's imagination to build up "writing pressure." That process can include a brainstorming or note-taking process that will remain long after the initial inspirational experience passes.

Getting past the dreaded "false start"...

That rehearsal can result in half-written "false starts" that are sometimes confused with writer's block. That confusion is the bane of many writers who never seem to accomplish much because they wrongly perceive that they have somehow run out of ideas and inspiration.

Here is where the writer needs to follow the good advice, "Get over yourself!" The transition from thinking to writing is much the same as a building architect experiences as the general ideas of form and function coalesce and take shape.

The architect first thinks of the overall idea and purpose of the structure and then applies the formal principles of the trade, makes the necessary compromises imposed by space and money, and makes the transition between the ideal and the practical. The architect must always follow the "get over yourself" advice and abandon Utopia in favor of getting the structure designed and built.

Clarity of thought, and knowing where you're going...

What the writer produces, then, is the product and reflection of the author's clarity of thought and knowing in advance where the writing is going.

Some writers can simply map the whole process out in their heads. Others - Ernest Hemingway, for example - never began writing their novels without preparing a complete outline. Papa Hemingway once said words to the effect that "the first draft is crap."

Technical flawlessness means following and breaking the rules...

Good writers, regardless of how they get to their final product, leave nothing to chance. Their product is technically flawless. The flawlessness is in following writing conventions of good grammar and syntax, with creative deviations from the latter three.

The technical flawlessness is made commercially successful and memorable **by the writer's talent**. The kernel of the idea came first. They thought about it, planned it, and wrote it.

Writing is more than belly-button gazing...

All writers, then, need to "get over themselves" in another important way. To the degree that writers regard writing as a self-indulgent, cathartic experience, they distance themselves from the single most important person in the writing process: **the reader**.

There is always a certain amount of self-satisfaction in a well-written piece, and most writers will admit to being motivated by the "buzz" they get by revisiting something they wrote in the past. Nevertheless, the successful writer drops the ego and becomes dedicated to the craftsmanship that attracts readers.

Conclusion

Writing is a wonderful experience that allows us, through language, to connect. It is the underpinning of our culture and memorializes generations better than any dry historical record.

Each of us is trapped within our skulls and experiences the world around us in our own limited and unique ways. The writer has a unique vehicle to transfer an out-of-body experience to readers. The secret to good writing is to make sure nothing is lost in the translation.

So, get over yourself. Start writing from the reader.