

10 Unforgettable Writing Tips

By Melissa F. Kaelin | KaelinArt.com

Storytelling is an art form that is as unique as the people who create each story. In writing, it is also a craft, with tried-and-true ways to convey meaning to others.

As I've studied and written fiction, I've found some approaches to creativity that truly speak to me. These techniques can imbue our words with meaning, breathe life into our work, and inspire us along the way.

1. Don't be a slave to perfection, especially in the first draft of your novel. The book, in particular the first chapter, will take shape as you write.
2. Enchant the reader from the first paragraph. There is mystery in a great first line, and there is magic in a great first impression.
3. Give each character a distinctive voice and style, letting it show in dialogue. The whole story comes alive when the writing achieves a successful voice, tone, and theme — and these work together to give the book some personality.
4. Raise the stakes! One of the first things readers look for in a good story is the ambitions, hopes, desires and motivations of the protagonist, and the stakes must be high for our hero to embark on a truly transformative journey.
5. Trust the reader. Ever repeated something to ensure the reader doesn't miss it? When there's subtlety, nuance or subtext — even variations on a theme — let the writing speak. Readers are bright! They will listen.
6. Sometimes setting becomes more than just a place. Whether it's the forces of nature, the direction an old house leans, or the obstacles created by a crappy car, the setting that surrounds your characters can antagonize, challenge, and inspire them.
7. Bring the story to life with movement. Every chapter should serve a purpose, even if the purpose is to expose the truth of the characters. When there's movement in every chapter, the pages almost turn themselves.
8. Let the writing surprise you. Let it move you. Creativity is a gift, carrying with it the freedom to do anything you can imagine. If you write with this in mind, you might be shocked, comforted, and moved by your own words. So, too, will the reader.
9. Read the words out loud. Before you share your work, listen to the lines. Hear the voice, tone, rhythm, tension, and resolution. Laugh to the humor. Cry to the pain. Smile to the victory. Revising the sounds of the writing will make the story sing.
10. Don't give up. As you work toward a polished manuscript or a publishing contract, never give up. Keep going. No matter how hard it gets. The published authors are the writers who persist.