

Craft and Non-Craft Topics to Stir Thought

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Becoming a Writer

* Identifying and overcoming the fear of failure, and the fear of success — Overcoming unreasoning fear is both the beginning of and a recurring part of the process of becoming a prolific fiction writer.

* A discussion of Heinlein's Rules — Five ridiculously easy rules that are incredibly difficult to follow. For now, just go with me on this. They work. Get your PDF copy of the rules at <https://harveystanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Heinleins-Business-Habits-Annotated-2.pdf>.

* A discussion of Writing Into the Dark — I've been where you are, but I am a solid convert. This technique will prove its own value as you practice.

* Believing in yourself (that fear thing again) — Balancing a firm belief in yourself and your abilities with continuing to learn Craft is essential to becoming a fiction writer.

* Making (not finding) time to write — Actually, it's finding and then making. This includes an exercise (strongly recommended). You will find it revelatory.

* Establishing, recognizing, and assessing your priorities — This can be harsh, but it's essential.

* Helping others understand you are a writer — You will need your loved ones to also understand your priorities.

* Establishing your writing habit — Again, essential (duh). If you want to be a writer, you have to write.

* Establishing your ability to Keep Coming Back — As essential as showing up to write in the first place.

* Setting achievable goals that both reward you and make you reach — Dreams are outside your control. Goals are not, and they will get you to where you're going.

* Where Story comes from — We can discuss this more deeply if necessary, but here's the bottom line: Nobody knows where Story comes from, so don't worry about it. Maybe you're channeling the story or maybe it's coming from your own subconscious. But really, what does it matter?

Writing Craft 1: Essential Craft Topics

* Coming up with story ideas — Story ideas are not golden. They're a dime a thousand. When this is over, you will be flooded with a continual stream of story ideas. Includes ways to exercise the idea muscle.

* The five-senses exercise — You Will Be Astounded. How to truly convey the whole story and pull the reader to depth (and keep her there) as you do so.

* Writing openings — Five senses, ground the reader, intro the character, etc. No technique will leap your writing craft ahead more quickly. Writing openings for short stories, novels, chapters and major scenes. Includes practical application. For a tiny taste of the importance of character and description, see "On Character and Description" at <https://harveystanbrough.com/on-character-and-description/>.

* On being a "putter-inner" or a "taker-outer" — Stephen King once wrote that there are two kinds of writers: taker-outers and putter-inners. Which are you and why does it matter?

Writing Craft 2: Advanced Craft Topics

* Writing hooks — Grab the reader with a sentence that makes him hungry to read more. See my book Writing Great Beginnings (only available directly from me, on request).

* The various types of cliffhangers and how to write them — Not all cliffhangers are physical, and very few encompass physically hanging from a cliff.

* Writing into the dark

* Cycling — A discussion of technique, and specifically of being unstuck in time in your story.

* Taking your time and focusing down

* Trusting your characters — All story begins with and hinges on character. The reader roots for character, and the character(s) live the story, react to the setting, etc. It's all about character.

* POV characters, and the importance of the POV character's opinion of setting — Not YOUR opinion. The POV character's opinion. The difference and why it is essential.

* Writing setting (via the POV character) — Ground the reader. Characters don't exist in a vacuum. They exist in a setting. Every one of them. See my book Writing the Character-Driven Story.

* Writing openings — Five senses, ground the reader, intro the character, etc.

* Writing the transitional scene specifically — Not as much detail required, but focusing down? Oh yes!

* Writing the major scene specifically — All the tools of the trade brought together.

* Writing dialogue (see my book, Writing Realistic Dialogue) — In the written word, dialogue equals action.

- * The difference between and use of dialogue tags and brief descriptive narratives — These are different tools with different purposes.
- * Writing effective dialect (see my book, *Writing Dialect*) — Less is more, how and why.
- * Writing endings (and what an ending actually is) — It's probably not what you think.
- * Developing and using the reverse outline — One of the most valuable tools in your writer's toolkit.
- * Writing short stories, novellas or novels in series and the importance of a series bible — Expanding the reverse outline, plus.

Additional Craft And Non-Craft Topics

- * Heinlein's Rules
- * So-called "deep POV"
- * So-called "show, don't tell"
- * The short story, novella and novel and the differences between them
- * Recommended other valid resources (see <https://harveystanbrough.com/downloads/> and <https://harveystanbrough.com/writer-resources/>)
- * "Bogging down" or "getting stuck" and how to get through it
- * Inventory — Why it's important to keep track of your Intellectual Property (IP) and ways to do that.
- * Licensing — Discussion focused on your Intellectual Property (IP). It isn't about just publishing a book or story anymore. It's about expanded marketing into other possible venues.