

On Writing “Fast” and Quality

©2024 Harvey Stanbrough

Bestselling author Vin Zandri will tell you he writes no more words per day than will enable him to maintain quality. I couldn't agree more.

Papa Hemingway was famous for reading over every manuscript from the beginning (cycling) before he started each day's writing.

Other writers, including me, cycle back over what we wrote during the previous writing session before reaching the white space and continuing writing.

My readers swear by (not at, grin) my books. The comment I hear from readers most often is that they feel they're part of the story. That they're inside it, standing just outside the scene, eavesdropping and watching what's going on.

Good. That's exactly where they should be, and it's exactly where I want them to be.

I set an annual goal this calendar year (2024) of writing 24 novels, two novels per month. If I finish my current novel by March 31, I'll still be on track for that.

No, I haven't always been able to do that. But it all has to do with confidence in yourself, practice (putting new words on the page) and diligence (putting hours in the chair). Still, over the past almost ten years, I've turned out 88 novels. So almost 9 novels per year.

If I keep pace with my goal, by the end of October 2024, I will have written 20 novels this year, and that average will have increased to 9.8 novels per year.

If I don't finish the current novel by March 31, I'll be slightly behind the pace, but it's nothing I can't make up quickly.

And that includes having taken some time off to write a major new 'how-to' on writing: *Writing Better Fiction*, and more time off to compile the *Blackwell Ops Soleada Garcia* omnibus collection of seven novels.

Yet the myth persists even among some other writers that writing “fast” means poor quality.

When I mentioned my writing non-process to one writer who now writes posts for The Kill Zone blog and who churns out two novels per year (and is thought by some to be prolific), she actually said to me, “Yes, but I like to turn out *quality* work.”

Again, my readers love my stories and novels.

So if you were me, who would you listen to? The pundits who say I should slow down, take the time to outline each new novel before I write it and then revise, then shop it around to a critique group and beta readers, and then rewrite and “polish” (I still don't know what that means) before I finally (finally, finally) publish?

Or would you listen to the readers who say they feel as if they're in the story with the characters and I should keep it coming?

Okay, first let's dispel the myth about writing "fast." I don't write "fast." Boom. There it is.

On a good day, I type 1000 to 1200 words per hour. That's only 17 to 20 words per minute. That leaves a lot of time for sipping coffee or staring off into space.

On days when I turn out 3000 or 4000 or 5000 words, I do so because I spent 3 or 4 or 5 hours in the chair at my writing 'puter.

So that myth is gone. It isn't the speed of your typing; it's the number of hours you're able or willing to spend in the chair. Period.

Now let's talk about Quality.

First, I don't spend all day writing. In fact, I put in a lot more time working now than I did when I had an outside job.

My work now consists of or writing and publishing [the Journal](#) (about two hours per day) or other nonfiction things, plus

- answering emails,
- creating promo docs for publications,
- designing and creating book covers,
- maintaining StoneThread Publishing,
- going live on YouTube, etc.

Well, and occasionally doing necessary chores around the house and grounds.

Here's what I do to ensure quality stories and novels for my readers:

1. **Practice.** whenever I'm not busy working or eating or sleeping, I'm writing fiction.
2. **Cycle.** I read over what I've written to give the characters a chance to add anything I missed. They do that during a brief pause in the action (writing) while I'm gasping for breath from trying to keep up with them.
3. **Practice.** When I reach the white space after cycling through what I wrote before, I put more new words on the page.
4. **Learn.** Between novels or stories, I read blogs or other writers' stories and novels and glean what I can. When I find a place where the writer blew me away and I don't know how s/he did that, I study that section to learn how s/he did it.
5. **Practice.** Are you seeing a pattern here? Lather, rinse, repeat.

I also test every other endeavor in my day-to-day life against Scott Carpenter's WIBBOW rule: Would I Be Better Off Writing.

The answer is usually yes, and I go write. When the answer is no, I do that first, and then I go write.

So if you aren't yet a fiction writer and you want to be, you can.

I recommend following the steps above. With regard to Step 4, you can learn every aspect of the craft by reading [***Writing Better Fiction***](#), which is always on sale in ebook or paper at StoneThread Publishing.

If you already write fiction and want to increase your productivity AND THE QUALITY OF YOUR STORIES, I also recommend following the steps above.

This isn't what you'll hear from 99+% of the pundits out there, but it's the truth.

If you want to write quality fiction, all you have to do is take a deep breath, trust yourself and your characters, set aside all the stupid myths, and plunge in.

It really is worth it.