

# Notebooks and Rituals

creative  
writing

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One thing an 'ABC of Writing a Book' does very well is **talk of markets, audiences and that chimera for creative writing: money.**

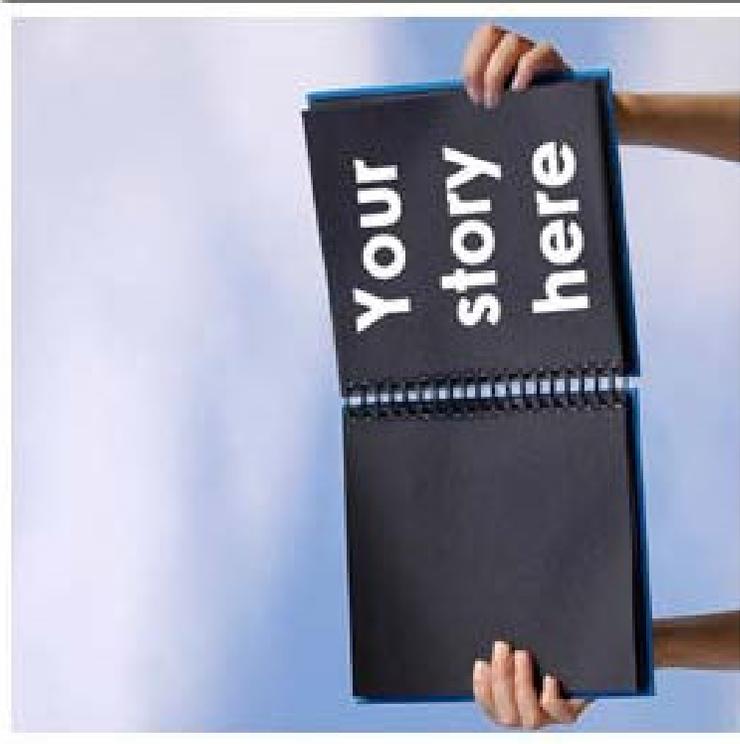
However, since writing creatively does not always bring much financial comfort, one of its underrated merits for the beginner is that it is relatively inexpensive compared to other art forms.

Later stages of a writer's career are more demanding, especially if research is necessary. **The beginner's equipment is a NOTEBOOK and a pen or pencil, and access to a computer.**

# Record and Practice

If you have not done so already, buy yourself a **NOTEBOOK**. Date it, and replace it when it is completed, but ensure you **keep all of them safely**.

- ❖ The notebook is a movable workplace.
- ❖ It may be paper-bound, or a hand-held computer.
- ❖ Whatever form, it must be practical, comfortable and portable.
- ❖ It must suit the way you conduct yourself as a writer.



You use it for writing regularly, but the main uses will be **to record ideas** for sentences while you are actively thinking about one hundred other matters; to take down interesting material while traveling; or to record sentences and dialogue you hear, or overhear. You will also use it as a scrapbook of sorts.



A writer's notebook functions as what used to be called a 'commonplace book', in which you record sentences, lines of poetry, images and paragraphs by other writers that you find especially intriguing for one reason or another.

In this way, you create a personal anthology, one that you can reread for ideas, encouragement and illumination of problems in your own writing.



A notebook travels with you, even to your bedside. One of the most common times for ideas and images to arrive (gallingly) is during the period between trying to sleep and sleep itself.



You may experience fascinating reveries when the conscious mind shuts down and dream or fantasy surprise you back into waking.



These are forms of active dreaming. If that happens, however tired you are, make note of any images that have arisen, or the phrases that have come to you.

Do not fool yourself into thinking you will remember it next day, even though not everything is going to be of use to you, and some of it will seem asinine.

Buy yourself a hand-held voice-recording device and make your notes orally.

This period before sleep is an especially receptive one when you are engaged in a book, poem or article whose process absorbs your daylight hours.

You have seemingly finished your day's work, but your mental processes will still be flickering on their reel.

The reservoir of your creative thinking needs time to fill up – let your unconscious mind do all that filling and working.

So, rather than holding a night-long vigil over your notebook, write enough to be satisfied that you have netted what is most important.



Your notebook is a fine-meshed net in constant trawl, collecting far more detritus than it does material you may later find useful. And, one of the tricks of being able to read any net is to know what that detritus might yield.

Pretty well anything has some possibility and some beauty for a writer, given enough scrutiny. That which appears at first to be obsolescent, boring or ugly may prove to be ideal.

Everything is quarry, everyone is material, and everywhere is fieldwork.

## HOW TO BE AN EXPLORER OF THE WORLD.

1. ALWAYS BE LOOKING.  
(NOTICE THE GROUND BENEATH YOUR FEET.)
2. CONSIDER EVERYTHING ALIVE & ANIMATE.
3. EVERY THING IS INTERESTING. LOOK CLOSER.
4. ALTER YOUR COURSE OFTEN.
5. OBSERVE FOR LONG DURATIONS (AND SHORT ONES.)
6. NOTICE THE STORIES GOING ON AROUND YOU.

One of the most fascinating places to collect the noise of speech, and the speech of human behavior, is anywhere in which a large number of people gather, usually to make a journey.

Such places – airports, bus and train stations – have the effect of making everyday human concerns provisional, unstable and transitory. The heart is not here, far from home.

It is not so much that you are observing what people are saying, **but how they say it and why they say it that way**. It is a parade of styles. You are an ethologist – you study behavior.



You should take your notebook everywhere and have it with you all the time. You should not, as some apprentice-writers do, limit your notebook work to places and times you think inherently ‘inspirational and beautiful’.

To do so is merely to experience second-hand or custom-bound notions of aesthetic experience.



Notebooks are rougher and readier than a Claude glass. How you organize your notebook is important, but do not use the organization of notebooks and files as a displacement activity for not writing. It is the equivalent of tidying your home before settling to work.

A simple form of organization is to possess two notebooks: ***one for recording and collecting, and one for writing and drafting.***

Inspiration

NEXT EXIT 

