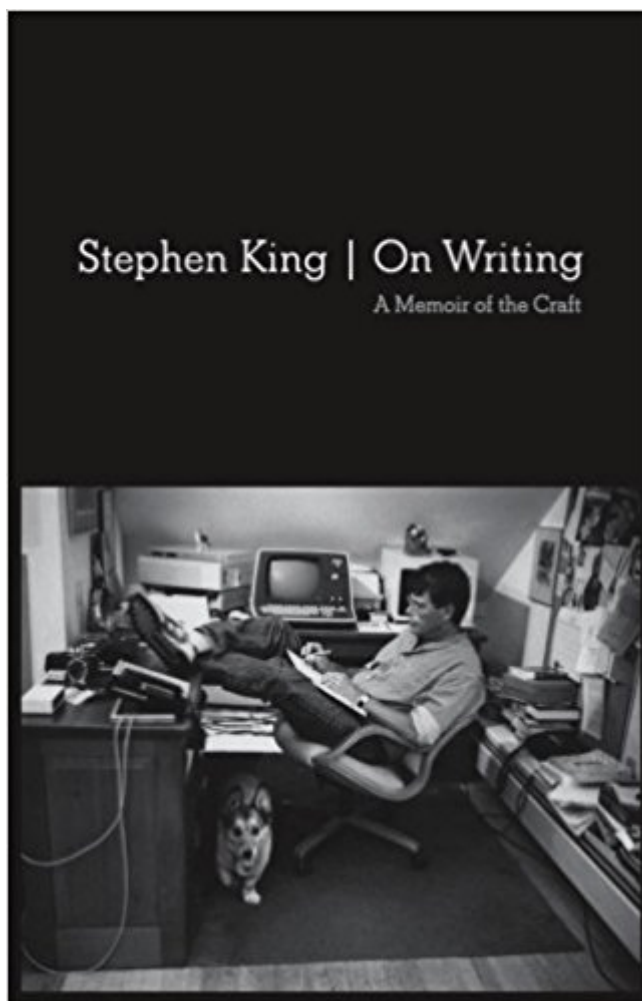


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# On Writing: 10th Anniversary Edition: A Memoir Of The Craft



## Synopsis

Immensely helpful and illuminating to any aspiring writer, this special edition of Stephen King's critically lauded, million-copy bestseller shares the experiences, habits, and convictions that have shaped him and his work. "Long live the King" • hailed Entertainment Weekly upon publication of Stephen King's On Writing. Part memoir, part master class by one of the bestselling authors of all time, this superb volume is a revealing and practical view of the writer's craft, comprising the basic tools of the trade every writer must have. King's advice is grounded in his vivid memories from childhood through his emergence as a writer, from his struggling early career to his widely reported, near-fatal accident in 1999—and how the inextricable link between writing and living spurred his recovery. Brilliantly structured, friendly and inspiring, On Writing will empower and entertain everyone who reads it—fans, writers, and anyone who loves a great story well told.

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## Customer Reviews

Short and snappy as it is, Stephen King's On Writing really contains two books: a fondly sardonic autobiography and a tough-love lesson for aspiring novelists. The memoir is terrific stuff, a vivid description of how a writer grew out of a misbehaving kid. You're right there with the young author as he's tormented by poison ivy, gas-passing babysitters, uptight schoolmarms, and a laundry job nastier than Jack London's. It's a ripping yarn that casts a sharp light on his fiction. This was a child who dug Yvette Vickers from Attack of the Giant Leeches, not Sandra Dee. "I wanted monsters that ate whole cities, radioactive corpses that came out of the ocean and ate surfers, and girls in black bras who looked like trailer trash." But massive reading on all literary levels was a craving just as

crucial, and soon King was the published author of "I Was a Teen-Age Graverobber." As a young adult raising a family in a trailer, King started a story inspired by his stint as a janitor cleaning a high-school girls locker room. He crumpled it up, but his writer wife retrieved it from the trash, and using her advice about the girl milieu and his own memories of two reviled teenage classmates who died young, he came up with *Carrie*. King gives us lots of revelations about his life and work. The kidnapper character in *Misery*, the mind-possessing monsters in *The Tommyknockers*, and the haunting of the blocked writer in *The Shining* symbolized his cocaine and booze addiction (overcome thanks to his wife's intervention, which he describes). "There's one novel, *Cujo*, that I barely remember writing." King also evokes his college days and his recovery from the van crash that nearly killed him, but the focus is always on what it all means to the craft. He gives you a whole writer's "tool kit": a reading list, writing assignments, a corrected story, and nuts-and-bolts advice on dollars and cents, plot and character, the basic building block of the paragraph, and literary models. He shows what you can learn from H.P. Lovecraft's arcane vocabulary, Hemingway's leanness, Grisham's authenticity, Richard Dooling's artful obscenity, Jonathan Kellerman's sentence fragments. He explains why *Hart's War* is a great story marred by a tin ear for dialogue, and how Elmore Leonard's *Be Cool* could be the antidote. King isn't just a writer, he's a true teacher. --Tim Appelo --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"No one ever asks [popular novelists] about the language," Amy Tan once opined to King. Here's the uber-popular novelist's response to that unasked question a three-part book whose parts don't hang together much better than those of the Frankenstein monster, but which, like the monster, exerts a potent fascination and embodies important lessons and truths. The book divides into memoir, writing class, memoir. Many readers will turn immediately to the final part, which deals with King's accident last year and its aftermath. This material is tightly controlled, as good and as true as anything King has written, an astonishing blend of anger, awe and black humor. Of Bryan Smith (who drove the van that crushed King) watching the horribly wounded writer, King writes, "Like his face, his voice is cheery, only mildly interested. He could be watching all this on TV...." King's fight for life, and then for the writing life, rivets attention and inflames admiration as does the love he expresses throughout for his wife, novelist Tabitha. The earlier section of memoir, which covers in episodic fashion the formation of King the Writer, is equally absorbing. Of particular note are a youthful encounter with a babysitter that armchair psychologists will seize upon to explain King's penchant for horror, and King's experiences as a sports reporter for the *Lisbon, Maine, Weekly Express*, where he learned and here passes on critical advice about writing tight. King's writing

class 101, which occupies the chewy center of the book, provides valuable advice to novice scribes. Although other than King's voice, idiosyncratic and flush with authority, much of what's here can be found in scores of other writing manuals. What's notable is what isn't here: King's express aim is to avoid "bullshit," and he manages to pare what the aspiring writer needs to know from idea to execution to sale to a few simple considerations and rules. For illustration, he draws upon his own work and that of others to show what's good prose and what's not, naming names (good dialogue: Elmore Leonard; bad dialogue: John Katzenbach). He offers some exercises as well. The real importance of this congenial, ramshackle book, however, lies neither in its autobiography nor in its pedagogy, but in its triumphant vindication of the popular writer, including the genre author, as a writer. King refuses to draw, and makes a strong case for the abolition of, the usual critical lines between Carver and Chandler, Greene and Grisham, DeLillo and Dickens. Given the intelligence and common sense of his approach, perhaps his books' many readers will join him in that refusal. 500,000 first printing. (Oct.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I enjoyed this book thoroughly, and took my time reading it. I could "hear" Mr. King's "voice" in my head as I read this on my iPad Kindle app. I felt like I was reading something from a friend---as if he had written a personal letter to me--- to give me an understanding of what he went through to become the person he is today. I think that his directives about the "how-to's" and "don't do's" were very practical. I breathed a sigh of relief when I got the feeling that writing classes and clubs are kind of a waste of time. Just write, is what I think he was telling me, I mean, his audience. I will probably read it again. What I got from his personal, real-life-lessons is this: Read a lot. Read good stuff. Write all the time. Find a place and write. Don't share your stuff unless you share it with someone you can trust. Go with your gut. Write all the time (I said that already because he said it or inferred it frequently). Don't use the same adjective over and over. Stick to the point. Don't over-do it on the descriptions. Let your audience see the movie you see in your head, because if you write it well, they will. I am glad this wasn't a "point by point HOW TO WRITE a story or a book" book, because really, writing isn't something you can do easily from a bulleted list. Writing is something you do from your heart, and you keep doing it until it's right and good. And then when that person you trust reads your stuff and offers some criticism, you can take it for what it's worth and use it or not.

'On Writing' is a revealing and practical look at the writer's craft, comprising many of the necessary

tools of the trade for any aspiring author. It is a gem of a resource and entirely worth its purchase price in my opinion. It is noteworthy to relate that this is NOT a 'how-to' book on crafting novels and short stories. Although Mr. King provides many nuggets of wisdom for aspiring writers throughout his book, he makes it clear that every author must forge their own pathway toward their goals, whatever they may be. In other words, there is no such thing as a blueprint for success in his vocation. Because good stories essentially write themselves, in most situations it is wise for an author to 'go with the flow' rather than obsessively follow a rigid plot or storyline schematic in their mind. Every writer needs their own muse to kindle their own imagination. He compares the discovery of a good story idea with digging up a fossil; the quality of the find(story) is ultimately dependent on the skill of the author to delicately extract the fossil from the earth and polish it up for museum goers. I have improvised a little bit on his analogy, but I think it fits. *On Writing* is a compelling, forthright narrative on what obstacles aspiring authors might expect to encounter on their personal journeys toward self-fulfillment. It is also a tough love manual for writers peppered with anecdotal stories of Mr. King's interesting life along the way. I found it illuminating and have a far greater understanding of the craft after reading this book.....There are a plethora of takeaways from this fine reference, far too many to include in my review. I will attempt to prioritize the more important ones for myself and relay them to anyone kind enough to read my review on . If I have neglected to mention any of value, they have probably been mentioned or discussed before in countless other reviews of this work.

Takeaway 1--Omit needless words, adverbs, the passive voice, and excessive description whenever possible.

Takeaway 2--Imitation often precedes creation. SK related how as a child he often copied stories from authors he enjoyed verbatim; sometimes omitting and sometimes adding story fragments of his own creation. There is no shame in imitation if it is part of the learning process!

Takeaway 3--King lists his wife/marriage and his physical health as his two keys for success. The message for aspiring authors should be to exercise regularly and marry someone who is both positive and supporting of your endeavors.

Takeaway 4--Read a lot and write a lot. The art of description is a learned skill that develops and improves with copious reading and voluminous writing. There is no substitute for time invested in this make-or-break skill set.

Takeaway 5--Keep your story chronological whenever possible. Flashback sequences sometimes work well in the movies or on television, but often come across as corny or cliché in novels..

Takeaway 7--Find a network of trustworthy individuals to read and give feedback on your first draft in its rawest form. ....

Affably written and educational, this well organized book is a delight to read. There were several revelations in this book, the most important one revealed as Mr. King recounted his near-fatal accident in 1999(he was hit by a drunk driver in a van while out for his

afternoon walk). He professes that life isn't a support system for art --the reverse is actually true. Art is a support system for life. Mr King recounts vividly how the inseparable link between his writing and his life helped motivate him during the many months of his painful recuperation. My favorite quote of his is near the end of the book: "Writing isn't about making money, getting famous, getting dates, getting laid, or making friends. In the end, it's about enriching the lives of those who read your work, and enriching your own life, as well." I cannot recommend this inspirational and entertaining book highly enough to readers. Published in 2001? Seems like it was written yesterday!

I enjoyed reading this book. To get inside the authors thoughts and feelings about something we both love was awesome. It felt so personal and it was like he was having a conversation with me and wasn't holding back. If you love to write, I would recommend you to read the book. But if you're looking for the writing King to be soft on you about the craft, then forget it. Mr. King gives you the real about writing; he gets real about writing. I have added this book to my writing toolbox. Hopefully if you read this book, you'll understand what I mean. Happy Reading!!

I'm an academic. Many of us academics walk around headless because our heads are so far up our own asses. Stephen King is the antidote. If you're not sold on the book by the time you read the first three forwards, I don't know what could sell you. But this is a refreshingly colloquial and real account of what makes a writer and what can help a writer get better. Fantastic read. I'd almost forgotten reading can be enjoyable until I read this book.

If you are looking at getting into writing this is the absolute best book. Stephen has a way of laying out the complicated process of creating a novel in such a clear, concise, common sense manner that you if have any part of you that is interested in writing, you will have no reason not to try. His take on writing in what I would refer to as "freestyle" is right up my alley. For the longest time I thought novelists designed an entire plot and framework to their books, having the details listed out, character profiles, etc. Not Stephen. He comes up with the basic story just by looking at the world around him and wondering "What If?" and then he lets it rip. My favorite part of the entire book is the underlying idea that a writer should be nothing more than an Amanuensis or transcriber of the story that already exists somewhere out there in the Universe. A writer is reading the existing story for the very first time and simply writing it down for others to enjoy. I absolutely love that philosophy towards writing. Don't create the story. Understand that it already exists and you just have to uncover it. It's the most rewarding and adventurous way to look at writing.

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