

Self-Exploration for Writers

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9. Preparing to Write

How much writing research, study, dreaming and imagining, and other preparations have you done? What more can you do? Investing time in the craft of writing is just as important as investing money in editing, designing, and publishing. Think back, and write down, specifically, everything you have done—or plan to do. We have covered some of these points previously, but now it is time to pull them together as you prepare to write!

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| Courses, including school, post-secondary, continuing education courses, other training: |
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| Writing workshops, conferences and retreats I have attended: |
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| Writers' groups, feedback groups, and writing partners/friends I spend time with: |
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| Books I've read by famous writers (how-to books, writer memoirs, and their writing which I admire: |
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Time I spend writing: How can I schedule writing into my life so that it is an important regular activity?

Here is something you may not have thought about. Teaching others, whether formally or informally, is a great personal skill builder. As soon as you have learned a writing skill, no matter how basic, share it with someone else. Not only will they learn the skill, but your own ability in the skill will improve. For the following, answer in specific detail what you have done or can do:

Teach lessons or workshops:

Participate in writing groups (simple advice or encouragement counts!):

Coach other writers (even simple homework help, beta reading advice, etc.):

Make helpful comments in social media discussions and in blog comments:

Create my own writing blog posts and create guest posts for others' blogs, or help others develop their author blogs/websites:

Other ways I can teach and encourage other writers:

Putting your exploration into practice: This is the last exercise in this “Self-Exploration for Writers” series. By now, you will have a strong sense of yourself as a writer. So start writing! And publishing!

Yes, get to work on your “dream project.” But also write and publish small projects. Seeing them in print (on paper or online) will be a great encouragement as you continue to work on that big project. For example:

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper or a magazine you enjoy reading, or submit a local news article (yes, perhaps for free to start with—get your name noticed).
- Start a simple website or blog and post at least once a week.
- Write interesting comments on social media or blog posts others have posted.
- Explore the internet and find sites where you can share poetry, answer questions, or post your thoughts on topics that interest you.
- Enter short story or flash fiction contests.
- Write a “how-to” about some aspect of writing and email it to a friend you know will appreciate learning about it.
- Write a long, interesting letter (in handwriting, with stationary and a stamp!) and mail it to someone you know will appreciate an old-fashioned friendly letter.
- Join a local writers’ feedback group and share a piece of writing.

You can, of course, also do journal writing, respond to prompts, and so on, for your own practice—but being published (putting your writing out there for the world to see) is so encouraging and will keep you wanting to write as you share your ideas with readers. It will also improve your writing and self-editing skills, which you can then apply to your dream project.

Don’t forget to place this exercise in your “Self-Exploration for Writers” binder.

And refer back to your binder once a year or so to see how far you’ve come—and to add fresh information and thoughts to keep track of your writing journey. Write on!