

BEATING THE ODDS WITH GOOD WRITING HABITS

By Denniger Bolton



Author of “Hippie Hollow - Murder on a Nude Beach” 2007
“The Armadillo Whisperer - Murder Behind Bars” 2008
“Honk if You’re Jesus - Murder by the Bay” 2008
www.DennigerBolton.com
Denny@DennigerBolton.com

Writing a book takes a blend of talents. Knowledge and creativity at the top. Starting your book is relatively easy. Completing it takes perseverance and good writing habits. Having talent will get you started, but employing good writing habits will get you through the first draft and beyond.

Unfortunately, developing any one of three detrimental habits will turn the odds against you and keep you from being an author. There are many new writers who have a manuscript but will not be published, but for every writer who is waiting to be discovered by a publisher, there are many times that many more, who because of their negative practices, are not even making it to the manuscript phase of their project. What are these bad habits and how do they manifest in your writing? Let’s take a look at the three most devastating and what you can do about them.

Procrastination. It’s defined as something you haven’t started or haven’t finished. Writing a book is a huge endeavor. When you look at the big picture, the finished manuscript or book, it seems overwhelming. How do you overcome? Fortunately, for every bad habit, there is a good one to replace it.

1. Take small bite sized pieces. There is a good reason athletes and coaches always say, “We’re not looking at next week, we are looking at the game today.” All writing happens in the moment, not tomorrow. It’s the journey that is important in this stage, not the destination.
2. Look at your map, your outline. Where are you going? What is your daily writing goal? A page a day? Ten pages a day? Four hours a day?

One hour at lunch? 500 words. Only you can know. Decide and get it in writing.

3. See the end result, the published book, but don't be concerned with the steps. Take the step that is in front of you. As you climb the mountain, you cannot see beyond the next bend in the trail. Every little step brings you naturally closer to the peak.

The Mis-Management of Time and Space. Not setting a definite schedule and not controlling your environment.

1. Pick a definite time of day to work. Same time everyday. 4 to 8 a.m. 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. One hour at lunch. Even if you stare at the screen for hours, keep to your schedule.
2. Block out the time. Pick your location and don't allow yourself to be interrupted. No phones. No email. Many writers are doing research as they write, spell checking and looking up facts as they go. As you do this, try not to get so bogged down in research so that you are not writing. The internet can be addictive and can take you away from the task at hand. Use it but don't let it control you.
3. Work the entire first draft as quickly as you can without worrying about re-writing. For a lot of writers, it's easy and more fun to re-write, but don't spend all your time on the first sentence, you'll probably change it later anyway.

Lack of Motivation. This means you don't want it bad enough. You want to be an author, want to be published, want to see your book in print. You also know it takes work and discipline to pull it off. You have doubts and you are letting your doubts about hearing only a handful of new writers actually get published. You question the quality of your work.

1. The opposite of not being motivated is being motivated. Ask yourself why you are doing this? And listen to your answer.
2. Choose sureness over doubt. If you stop the project, turn around and walk back down the mountain, what have you gained? Doubt only appears real. It doesn't ever get you anywhere.
3. Decide once and for all if you want it badly enough. What do you hope to gain? If it is what you want, to be a published author, then keep going.

It all starts with motivation. You have a dream. Stay focused on that dream. Control your space. See the end result, the manuscript, the book; however, concentrate on the task at hand for the day. Once you develop the good habits necessary to back up your talents, the odds turn to your favor.

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