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# Qualities of a Writer

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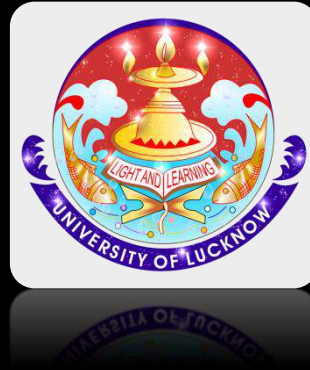
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# The Qualities that Make a Writer

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## Discipline

Very little gets written if the author waits for inspiration and makes no attempt to write regularly. It is important to keep what has been called the writing muscle in your mind in the flexible easy condition which is brought about by regular use. It is a very good idea to prepare yourself a timetable for writing and to stick to it.

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## Stamina

The idea of writing a book-length work may daunt you. However, if you write as little as 250 words on five days in each of fifty-two weeks you will have a 65,000 word book at the end of a year, and if you write a little more than 250 words and sometimes manage more than 5 days a week you'll be finished that much sooner.

## A love of words

Playing with words until you find the ones which really express what you want to say is one of the great fun things in writing.

## Observation

Writers watch people and events and store away material which they can use later. Reading and re-reading to see how published authors have coped with their problems is another essential form of observation.

## Imagination

The need for this quality must be obvious if you are a novelist or short-story writer, especially since it can provide material which lies outside your experience and cannot be gleaned from observation. Non-fiction writers also need imagination in the particular sense of putting themselves in the place of the potential reader to make sure that their writing is lucid.

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## Experience

All authors who produce fiction draw on their own experiences, and so do those in the factual field.

## Something to say

This need not necessarily mean that you have a message to put across, a desire to persuade others to share your own vision of life, or anything of that sort. It can be just a story that you want to tell, or an account of your back-packing holiday, or a word-picture that you want to paint.

## Dissatisfaction and Self-confidence

You should never be satisfied with what you write – even when you have revised it thoroughly, it could do with a little alteration here, a tiny bit of cutting there, and other little nibs and bobs of change. At the same time, you must have enough self-confidence to decide that it is time to stop fiddling about and to send the material off in the belief that it is good enough to get published.

## A Professional Attitude

It is good to stop thinking of yourself as a dabbler, an amateur—tell yourself that you are professional writer, and then behave like one. This means taking a serious attitude to your work (even if you are writing humour), trying to perfect your craft, learning something about publication processes, whether of books or of magazines, or any other way in which your work might be brought before the public, and generally meeting the criteria needed for success.

## An Awareness of the Market

Although there is a lot of sense in the advice that you should write primarily to please yourself, virtually every writer also wants to please or instruct other people. Do your market research so that you discover not only where to send your work with the best chance of seeing it published, but to see what length your material should be, how it should be presented and so on.



## **What is Good Writing?**

You know it when you see it. It isn't that hard to tell whether a piece of writing is good or bad. You just have to read it. But things get more challenging if you have to explain why it's good. Even harder than that is analyzing the good things a writer is doing so you can learn to use his or her techniques in your own work. And teaching others how to use them is the hardest of all but that, of course, is exactly what we need to be able to do.

Having simple phrases to describe the good things writers do makes learning about those things easier. Good writing has:

### **Ideas that are interesting and important**

Ideas are the heart of the piece — what the writer is writing about and the information he or she chooses to write about it.

## Organization that is logical and effective

Organization refers to the order of ideas and the way the writer moves from one idea to the next.

## Voice that is individual and appropriate

Voice is how the writing feels to someone when they read it. Is it formal or casual? Is it friendly and inviting or reserved and standoffish? Voice is the expression of the writer's personality through words.



## Word Choice that is specific and memorable

Good writing uses just the right words to say just the right things.

## Sentence Fluency that is smooth and expressive

Fluent sentences are easy to understand and fun to read with expression.

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# Thank You

