

How to write a book in four weeks



This article originally appeared on the Sydney Story Factory website September 2016. You can find [the original article here](#).

Target word count for September: 20,000 words.

Why?

Because I was embarrassed at how many I really do write. Today I have written two chapters of a new books; in the past two weeks have revised a 24,000 thousand word book. I counted up my emails today and reached 4,000 words, plus a 1,000 word column I will write tonight. True monthly target, counting columns, and emails? 50,000 perhaps. Maybe 100,000. I've never counted.

How?

I think a lot. I think out a book for at least three years before I write. 'Writer's block' is where you either run out of ideas, or subconsciously know the book isn't working and you need to trash it and begin again.

I write a lot, too. Commuting time is ten steps to my study, after a mooch along the valley.

But this is also where I admit I also read, think and write embarrassingly quickly, and have to consciously slow down the rate with which I speak, too. I 'double process', or even triple (I'm writing this watching a DVD, glancing up from the keyboard, and listening to my mother on the phone too. Don't tell Mum.) I also write in many, many genres, each one arriving to refresh my brain.

Writing tips?

Write

It is easier to rewrite than get the first draft on paper. I usually trash the first three days work of every book, but if I don't write those first three days, the book won't get to the stage it begins to works. Write lots, and then be ruthless. When in doubt, just cut it out.

Think

Fascinating ideas are more compelling than superb writing. On every bestseller list there is a book so badly written it is embarrassing, but so fascinating you keep turning the page. Only a very few writers have managed to write books of images so tempting that they alone draw the reader on.

Read

Read critically. Writing is a craft that can be absorbed, as well as taught.

Don't stop

Talent is more common than pigeons. Good writing needs determination. It can also be great fun.

And every time you think 'I can't do this', just add one word.