

Will
Write
For
Dopamine

By: T.M. O'Leary

I came up with this concept in a journal I keep handy. That is, when I was writing a rambling blog post in an offline text editor that I planned on publishing later to my blog. I've been doing that for over 14 years now - blogging. I suppose it is just a thing I like to do. I derive catharsis and joy from the act of writing, and some people can actually get paid from it. Not me, of course - I have no sense of life direction or professionalism in my character, so I cannot be a Wordsmith for someone else.

But it got me to thinking (this whole "I like to write" mantra I keep telling myself): maybe other people can derive some sort of use, or benefit, or just amusement, from me writing a small e-book about the "art" of writing - be it journaling, blogging, diary entries, or whatever produces the molecule of dopamine being released in the brain for personal pleasure.

That is what this document is: a collection of writing ABOUT writing, a litter of ideas, a mini-manifesto of personal beliefs, and how I go about the act of slinging words.

Hope it helps someone.

1. Put Your Money Where Your Markdown Is

I can't say unequivocally that I am an "Internet person". I feel I have been using the Internet on a "regular" basis since 1997, when my parents bought a Gateway 2000 computer for our house. The Internet was much different in the 1990s, but I couldn't expect much from this new technology because it was a thing that simply did not exist just several years before. Be it on AOL chat rooms, or odd forums, or just in a text editor with the "hopes" of publishing online someday - I would write out longhand pieces of teenage garbage - some of it made it to the WWW, some of it did not - all of it lost to digital oblivion. But, it got me started. Got my fingers moving. Planted a seed. Had me thinking in ways a "writer would think". Be it longhand, shorthand, poetry, prose, or prissy mad video game rants - words were manifested, ideas were corresponded, and SOMEONE read SOMETHING on the other end of the Internet Line.

And that's the first piece of advice I would have for anyone WANTING to write. It is best to just START. Doesn't matter if there are readers, or people encouraging you, or colleagues supporting you, or anything - just write TO write. Figure out HOW to familiarize yourself with a QWERTY keyboard. Figure out how a text editor works. Work on your Words Per Minute (WPM) (or, how many words you can type in less than a minute), figure out what file extension you like to save your works in (for me, it is ".MD", or Markdown (because I am writing for the Internet, afterall)). And just gets the "basics" down first. Otherwise, it will be like trying to summit a mountain on pure momentum alone. Cannot be done. Steps must be taken. Tools must be had. And basic knowledge of simple concepts must be understood.

2. Blurbs, and Bits, and Blots

I never promised anyone that this is THE "How To Write" handbook for the beginner, just a collection of texts or/and advice from over the years. So, let's just into the shorthand and longhand things I have written on the subject over time, shall we?

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Hammer text

This is more or less what I call "writing for the sake of writing", hammer text. There is also "Intentional Writing" (which I figured out/discovered long before having an official name for it from my Eng Comp 1 professor at Jefferson College), and then there is longhand/shorthand, which I previously referred to as "longform" and "shortform" (which are not proper terms, at all). Then there is poetry and prose, which I do well at the latter, fail miserably (usually) at the former. And then it all comes together in the end with being edited. Really, I edit as I go along (which would be maddening for most people, I realize), but I don't *need* to just "spit out" a bunch of thoughts in the blink of an eye to convey what it is I am saying/writing, and then go back and "fix it" after the document is finished. I can take my time, be contemplative, and hold small thoughts/concepts in my mind for long periods, as well as *flesh-out* what I want to say/write and how it will be said/written when the proper time comes. I am not a perfectionist, and I always re-read (and sometimes re-word) what I've put down, but, I don't want to fuss with a shitload of typos on the regular. Yes, I make a typo here and again (and fix it right away, usually), but a lot of people make what I would call **write-os** (not writeOS (which actually sounds like a really cool concept)). That is, say some junk that is nothing resembling real words, or grammar that is simply "poor", or playing a text-based puzzle game after writing a document to "figure out" what it is they want/mean *after* the fact. **THAT** is maddening, to me. It would benefit the writer, or would-be writer, or novice writer, or whatever to scrutinize the writing *process*, itself, when they are in the act of writing whatever it is they are writing. Editing *can* be a chore, so do yourself a favor and give yourself less of a mess to clean up later.

Three Million Words Written (and counting!)

The Start ...

In October 2006 I started blogging. I created a Blogger (.blogspot) blog using an e-mail address that my brother-in-law set up because at the time I did not know how to get a new e-mail address. I had not used the Internet to any good extent in over a year at that point. Before starting this blog, I had spent many days and nights visiting celebrity gossip blogs (or online tabloids) like Egotastic.com, IDontLikeYouInThatWay.com, CityRag.com, and countless others. I bounced around from link to link on those sites and soon realized that I wanted to be a blogger. On October 26, 2006, I became just that.

I started with 200-300 word posts. About celebrity gossip. The site was NotoriousNews.blogspot.com (terrible name, I know), and I wanted to be like the “big guys”, so I wrote five blog posts per day. Five days a week. Not including the “daily links” that I had up around lunchtime each day. To not make this blog post (the one you are reading) a “Gossip Blogging 101” class, I will summarize by saying that I wrote on this blog five days a week, every week from 2006-2011.

During this time, in 2009, I got a *PAID* job offer from the head writer/Webmaster of FatbackMedia.com (previously FatbackAndCollards.com) to write four blog posts per day for his Website, and I would be compensated for my time/writing. I did this from 2009-2011 while *simultaneously* maintaining the five blog posts per day on Notorious News (which each one had grown in size to 400-500 words per post).

Gossip Is Dead ...

In 2011, traffic was tanking. Social media is where all the eyes were, and no one wanted to read about celebrities when they could simply FOLLOW those celebrities on their favorite social network. So, the job ended, as did Notorious News. I quit blogging/writing all together for exactly six days. And then I discovered Tumblr. It was October 2011, almost five years to the day of starting Notorious News that I created my first Tumble-log and started to write about anything and everything. There were reblogs on there, too, but mostly original posts by me. That blog later was named Tomskee.com and I turned it into a “constant journal” or “life blog” in 2014 and it was updated on average

7-10 times per day. Perhaps 300-500 words written per blog post. Seven days a week.

Buh-Bye Tumblr, Hello Journals! ...

It was an impulse decision to delete my Tumblr at 2AM in the Summer of 2015, but I did it. And then I immediately grabbed a stack of papers and wrote, with ink pen, what I had just done. The paper I was writing this on was the back of a 75 volume of text which I had titled "The Typewriter Papers Vol. 1" that I wrote on, yes, a typewriter in 2015. I also wrote a Vol.2 and a Vol.3 to the "series", each 75 pages. The backs of all of those pages got filled with handwritten entries fairly quickly.

And as long as I am on journals, there were The BlackBerry Diaries (written on a BlackBerry Classic) in 2016 (2 volumes), The Pi Journals (written on Raspberry Pi, 4 volumes (which I still have)), and also Dog knows how many thousands of words written on a Website called writer.bighugelabs.com. And I also maintained hand-writing with the LifeOS journals (Vol.1 & 2 complete, working in the third now :))

Enter Write.as ...

Sometime around 2016 I started to really pay attention to my online privacy. I even had a resource Website called PSShub.online which stood for "Privacy, Safety, Security Hub" and I was very inspired by the Twitter account SwiftOnSecurity (even donating \$20 to her DecentSecurity.com Website). During my quest for the perfect writing platform and wanting to take my privacy seriously, I discovered Write.as, that always puts your privacy first. It was/is an incredibly unique platform, and their philosophy is simple: they won't sell-out and will offer a distraction-free, privacy-centric writing platform to any who need it. I am simply paraphrasing my interpretation of their philosophy, of course, but this is how I see it.

As of today, Feb. 12, 2020, I have 1,500+ blog posts on this platform starting just a bit over two years ago (on this blog anyway. I had a blog on here before, deleted/lost it, started again)

Why Am I Stating All This? ...

Well, if I had done one blog post per day, that was 500 words, seven days a week, for fourteen years – that equals 2,555,000 words written. *Realistically* it is much, Much higher a number. That is why I am rounding to 3 Million words written. Perhaps more like 4 or even 6 million words.

I was shocked when I started to think about it all, starting with a (failed to previously mention) e-book I wrote in 2014/15 titled “Job Corps Rule!” that was ended at 100K words, which is 10% of 1M, which got me to crunching numbers.

Keep writing!

Lessons Learned (from the past seven years of blogging)

Feeling more “vigorous” but less “enthused” about blogging lately. The frequency remains, but like the wall I hit with the weight loss, I feel I have hit a wall with any type of *quality* writing. Not that it matters, because this is simply a journal. But let's think for a second, what *have* I learned in the past 7 years of fairly frequent “life” updates (or journal entries)?

Combination of lessons from both Tumblr, (“tomskeedotcom”), and Write.as (here, “TMO”):

- *having an old blog means I can go back* (even if just skimming) and save old photos I have taken. As well as read an old blog post here and there. Good for memory capture.
- *blogging/journaling is quite cathartic*. Good to rant, vent, get out the bad stuff, figure out the good.
- *good way to hone interests*. Every idea I've ever had that has made any impact on my life in the past 7 years has almost always started with me writing about it in a blog post.

- *self-written reminders* to stay positive/optimistic (even if I do not believe them 100% at the time) keeps my spirits up. Because I think back and say, “yea, I wrote that, that is how I must be feeling”.
- *reactions*, I feel I know when I have written something “good” or “above average” (for me). I will *feel* it is good, and I will usually see an uptick in views/reads/whatever, as well as perhaps spur people to reach out via e-mail (even if I do not currently post a contact method on the Internet, for now).
- *thinking aloud*, I am able to just “think aloud” or “write aloud” what I want to be doing or what I might do, and sort of “hem and haw” via text editor, and things usually shake out to whatever it is I really want to be doing.
- *communicate*, I am able to every so often MEET someone (digitally) through having a blog. Read *their* blog. Be “blogging friends”. Socialize. Enjoy life.
- *writing filters*, (or, eliminating writer's block), I feel I can say *what it is* I want to say on a blog more these days. Less “I have to be so and so”, or, “I have to be on-brand”, or “I have to maintain a theme”, or anything like that. I just write what feels good/natural. And I can experiment with different elements of writing, because in my view, blogging is a will of the wisp/anything goes/creativity centre, and I don't *have* to be consistent with what is said.
- *discovering what I AM and what I AM NOT*, I think earlier in life, up until my early-30s, I had some sort of identity crisis in my life. Like I was “going to become” *this* or *that* – or, that I was capable of, and “wanted

to do”, *this* or *that*. Now, I just do what I am doing, and that is what I am doing, and if I do something else, I'll be doing that instead.

- *self honesty* (in life *and* in writing), in 2018 or so, when I was still using Twitter, someone said “If you're going to lie about something, lie to someone else. Don't keep it in and lie to YOURSELF! It's YOU! Be as honest and transparent with yourself as you can be.” And for some reason, that really rang true with me. I don't lie to myself anymore. Even if “the truth hurts”, it's important to be truthful up-front, because when the truth does come out, it hurts ten times worse, and then you're just hurting yourself ten times as much. And, the same goes for writing – I feel accountable to the people who do read and enjoy this blog. I want to be transparent and legit as I can be. There are personal details I may not share, but really I am about as open as I can be without giving away my SSN on the Internet, lol!

Quantitative Writing *IS* Qualitative Writing

Public writing is what I do most of, so it must be what I do best (even though I have my doubts about my abilities as a writer, in general).

So how I would put it is: the majority of my writing is published publicly on the Web, therefore it must be *better* than the offline writing I do less often in handwritten journals and offline/digital diaries.

What makes GOOD writing GOOD, anyway?

For me it is the barrier to entry, overcoming writer's block, and then overcoming mental barriers, in general, to convey what really needs to be said in the written form.

- 1) *Barrier To Entry*: Anyone can have a blog/run a blog/write ON a blog. And it is basically free on the Internet and has been since well before 2006 when I started out. So, no special skills needed. Just a willingness to write.
- 2) *Overcoming Writer's Block*: Just do “Intentional Writing” – fire up the text editor, put your fingers on the keyboard, and just write

anything/everything that comes to mind. Something worth keeping will manifest itself, and you can keep/publish that and delete the rest, if you want to.

- 3) *Overcoming Mental Barriers*: This is the best one, in my opinion. To be able to truly correspond, with shifting tones of voice (writer's voice) what it is you (or I) want to say and make them clear and relevant. I probably have a more monotone or "dry" tonality to some of my blog posts because they are just sort of day-by-day "filler" in terms of what I am wanting to say. Some things are more relevant, I am more enthusiastic about, are more interesting, so they come across as so in the writing. But I never want to "settle" for *just* writing something in an interesting fashion, but rather write something transformative in HOW it is written. A hard thing to describe. Nevertheless, ALL barriers would have to come down in order to achieve this. And as soon as a barrier is down, it regrows and has to be KEPT down through practice, trial, and error.

So, nothing is perfect. Just slog away and hammer out words until great things come about – but – great things *DO* come about every so often. So it is always worth it.

A Little Bit About Blogging

Came across a blog post from werd.io titled something to the effect of "blog more" or "You should blog", or something like that, and it was a fine little text hammer (I'll just refer to fast, short blog posts as text hammers from now on, thanks). Saying that everyone can/should maintain a blog, it opens opportunities for people, is their own corner of the WWW, etc. Good stuff (and I agree, and have been saying similar stuff since forever – although with little to no fanfare). And yea, since 2006 (or 2002 if you want to get technical), blogging has been a blast for me. Always did it, always will do it. Even if relegated to a smartphone with no WiFi and just my thumbs on a flat slab of glass, I get stuff written. Because it's ALL I Know! LMAO!

Seriously though, I would be lost without blogging. Even though I may get but a few comments, or Thanx, or just a "hi" per month – it is worth it. Because though I am glad some people read this little corner of the WWW, it is here for myself. And WHERE I write, and HOW I write, and to WHOM I write makes

a big difference in my world. Forum entries, Tweets, Toots, status updates, etc. – those don't work for me. It *has* to be in a longform (or, potentially a longform) text editor, and that text editor *has* to be going live on the Internet (e.g. blog platform), and it *has* to be as non-commercial (ad-free) as possible. Those are (some of) my standards.

People sometimes want to go back to the “Olden Days of Blogging Yore”, and when people could have Big, Noticeable, Relevant platforms just by hitting “Publish” on a blog post – and they capitalized on this by filling their little blogs with ads, and sponsored posts, and doing what *everyone* does when a certain service or platform gets trendy – make money from it. But rarely do I see people yearning for the days of “Blogging Antiquity”, before ads, or sponsors, or commercialism overran the blogosphere. Just, writing in/on the thing like a notebook, of sorts. Or a journal. About one's life. A log. On the Web. A Web-log. It's very raw when you really think about it.

Creative Blogging

One of the reasons I started a blog, and continue to blog, is for purposes of *creativity*. I want to *be* a creative person and make creative content for the Internet. Of course, it is also to document my thoughts, feelings, ideas - and to write about them in a creative manner, if I can. Another reason I write is to: “write about something that I like to help me understand why I like it”. I forget who originally said that, but I am just being too lazy to look it up right now, to be honest - but it is easily the best thing I have ever heard about the subject of journaling, ever.

Also, I noticed over the past few months (or maybe even a year), that I can convey more in a shorthand document than I could if I were writing a longform document. I used to think “the longer the better!”, which is simply not true. When it comes to almost anything in life, simplification is key (or at least a worthy trait). So, I'll keep it short.

3. Conclusion

Short. Simple. To-the-point. Didn't take much longer than a city commute, did it? Writing, at the end of the day, *is* a fun activity, and there *can* be a future in it - but just remember to practice, focus, have fun, and don't let anyone tell you you can't.