



# What I Wish I'd Known When I Started Writing



"I wish I'd known I could write like *me* and not what I thought was expected or normal."

**Amy Barnes, author of three short fiction collections and mom to two kids who love science and writing**

"I really wish I had known that I could write about my own reality (growing up in Hawai'i) and use my own language (Hawai'ian Pidgin Creole) to express it."

**Melissa Llanes Brownlee, author of *Hard Skin* and *Kahi and Lua***



"I wish I had know that it's really, truly okay if my writing style isn't for everyone, and that doesn't mean I need to change it."

**Gaynor Jones, author of *Among These Animals***

"I wish I'd known it was ok to just start writing a story with almost no idea where it might lead; I now know that not only is it ok to write like this, but that, in my experience, it usually makes for a much better story."

**Tim Craig, author of the short-short fiction collection *Now You See Him* (Ad Hoc Fiction)**



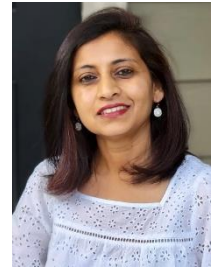


"What I wish I'd known before I started writing is that I must fall in love with my work before others can fall in love with it."

**Sudha Balagopal, author of *Things I Can't Tell Amma***

"I wish I'd known writing would become an all-consuming endeavor that would occupy my mind and influence my actions even when I wasn't at my desk, actively doing it."

**Sara Siddiqui Chansarkar, author of *Morsels of Purple* and *Skin Over Milk***



"Often the best ideas come when you're moving around away from your desk, so while you're tidying your room or walking to school, use that time to think about your story."

**Laura Besley, author of *100neHundred***

"I wish I'd known that it was okay to jump up in the middle of the night to write down a great story idea, which made no sense at all in the morning!  
And still believe in my creative ideas and keep on writing!"

**Susmita Bhattacharya, author of *Table Manners* and *The Normal State of Mind***



"I would tell my younger self: You can't always write something all at once, straight off - it's good to build a story, piece by piece."

**Caroline Greene, author of *Lessons At The Water's Edge* (a novella-in-flash)**

"Your first draft is never perfect and your stories will ALWAYS improve through editing; re-writing = real writing, polish them until they shine and don't be lazy!"

**Rick White, author of the short-story collection *Talking to Ghosts at Parties***



"When I started writing, I wish I'd known that first drafts are meant to be terrible."

**Anita Goveas, author of *Families and other natural disasters***

"I'd always heard that creative writing is a solitary activity—and it can indeed be that way—but it doesn't have to be; there are so many writers from all around the world who are eager to connect and share their expertise."

**Myna Chang, author of *The Potential of Radio and Rain***



"I wish I had known that it would be so friendly; I thought being a writer meant spending all day on your own with your own thoughts when in fact there is a whole community of other writers out there to chat to, swap work with, cheer each other on, and there are workshops, discussion groups, festivals - I have met some amazing people."

**Jupiter Jones author of *Gull Shit Alley and Other Roads to Hell***

"When I started out, it took me forever to pluck up the courage to share my work, and when I finally did, what I found was a wonderfully supportive group of fellow writers who continue to enrich my creative life in countless ways; and I discovered that everyone has those fears about opening up, about risking rejection - even best-selling authors, so my advice would be, find your tribe."

**Ali McGrane, author of *The Listening Project***





"I wish I'd known that every idea is worth trying at least once!"

**Lindz McLeod, writing coach and author of *Turducken* and *Beast***

"I wish I'd known that down times and fallow periods are a normal (and often necessary) part of living a creative life."

**Kathy Fish, author of *Wild Life: Collected Works from 2003-2018***



"Few writers produce fantastic first drafts. Get the words down. You can make it pretty later."

**Damhnait Monaghan, author of the novel *New Girl in Little Cove***

"I wish I'd known that writing is a craft that you have to always keep working on and practising - just like painting or carpentry or music - you will always keep learning and you have to keep working on your craft to improve."

**Lucy Hooft, author of the *Sarah Black Spy Series***



"When I started writing, I wish I would have known that one does not need a formal education to understand the mechanics of writing fiction, that it can be learned at any age and in any setting."

**Karen Schauber, editor of *Miramichi Flash***

“Look up ‘how to hold things lightly’, learn what it means, and then hold your writing lightly, by the fingertips.”

**Kristen Loesch, author of *The Last Russian Doll***



“What I wish I'd known when I started writing was that being a good writer takes practice just like playing the piano or learning how to play football.”

**Finnian Burnett, author of *The Clothes Make the Man***

“There really are such things as writing muscles that you can grow through practice. I wanted to write novels but every time I tried, I just fell over after a page or two. And then one day I started writing very short things - flash pieces and short stories - and managed to finish something! Over time, the pieces got longer until, one day, I realised I'd actually finished a book!”

**Dan Brotzel, author of *Hotel du Jack*, *The Wolf in the Woods*, and *Work in Progress***



“I wish I'd known that you don't have to be good at writing to write a good story - handwriting, punctuation and grammar can be sorted with help from others, but only you can write that story.”

**Ruth Brandt, author of *No One Has Any Intention of Building A Wall***

“I wish I'd known I would get better (a lot better) with practice (a lot of practice); it is critical to find mentors you trust; reading is a great teacher.”

**Diane Gottlieb, editor of *Awakenings (ELJ Editions)***





"What I wish I'd known when I first started writing is that all the rules I was being taught are actually tools not rules - tools to help writers store their ideas and narratives on the page so others can come along at any point, and understand what that writer meant to share - so learn the tools and how they work, because they'll give you control not only over how you write but also how you're read."

**Jan Kaneen, author of *The Naming of Bones*, *A Learning Curve* and *Hostile Environments***

"I wish I'd known that there's no wrong way to write."

**Alison Woodhouse, author of *The House on the Corner* (Ad Hoc Fiction) and *Family Frames* (V Press)**



"I wish I'd known that a story rejection wasn't a failure, but an opportunity to send the piece out again to find the best home possible."

**Dan Crawley, author of *Blur***

"Accept rejection and criticism as part of being a writer, and remember that persistence is the only way forward."

**KM Elkes, author of *All That Is Between Us***



"In writing for publishing, there's something beyond talent and perseverance – it's called luck, but sometimes not getting what you want is also luck as greater chances await!"

**Mandira Pattnaik, author of *Where We Set Our Easel***

“There’s no right way to write! You’ll find your voice and the stories you want to tell by playing around with lots of different ideas and styles.”

**Sharon Telfer, author of *The Map Waits***



“It’s actually quite good not to be in a rush to get published (sometimes it can feel like being sucked into something like the cartoon Wacky Races!); focus on improving as a writer and meeting other writers, take your time and develop your skills so that you have confidence based on firm knowledge of what you’re doing.”

**Michael Loveday, author of *Unlocking the Novella-in-Flash: from Blank Page to Finished Manuscript* (Ad Hoc Fiction, 2022)**

“There are many reasons to write; writing isn’t just about publication—it is also about enjoyment, catharsis, discovery, self-examination, and self-improvement—the more you bear that in mind, the more fulfilling writing becomes as a creative pursuit.”

**Matt Kendrick, writer, editor, and teacher of *Write Beyond the Lightbulb***

