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Tips for Writers (1)

## A Way to Write

I write.

During the times I write, I may work on many different pieces, essays, stories, poems, songs, books, achieve what progress I can in each piece, then leave it and work on another.

I don't wait for the perfect idea, sentence, paragraph, story, essay, song, book. I write down what I think, even if it's just the beginning of an idea. I read what I wrote down and revise it if it comes to me to do so, but I don't wait very long for something to come to me before I go on writing into my developing idea.

Perhaps some write fast and perfectly from beginning to end. Sometimes I write fast and perfectly from beginning to end, or almost perfectly, so I don't need to slow down to think. I'm grateful those times are given to me.

But most of the time, I write slowly. What I write needs much revision to make it say what I want it to say, even to understand better what I want to say in the piece I'm working on. I'm grateful for times of writing slowly. I'm grateful that I care enough about what I'm trying to say to devote the work required to develop the idea I'm working with in my thoughts, and to express it accurately.

During my times of writing slowly, I often need to prod myself onward, knowing that my writing in this moment isn't adequately expressing the idea I aim for, but knowing from years of experience that, if I write toward my not-fully-formed idea, I will have something to revise, to reshape toward a better-expressed idea. If I keep working this way, I will eventually have a complete and satisfactory piece.

In different pieces of writing that I bounce among,

I move ahead with the idea that it's better to have inadequate expression I can gradually reshape than to have nothing to work with, I go on with whatever idea I'm working with. I write down the next sentence or part of a sentence or write a note that will later remind me where I want to go with the next paragraph, the next idea.

If I stop because I don't know what to write next, I save what I have. I come back to it when I have time or when I have something more to write. If I want to keep writing, I go on where I left off in another piece.

When I'm writing, I give high priority to writing more. I review what I've written and revise what I've written when I see parts I could say better. After I revise so what I've written says closer to what I meant to write, to what I try to define and expand in my thoughts, the piece I'm working on may suggest more to write, and I write down further suggestions, even if they seem far from perfect.

If I have nothing that invites me to write at the moment, I move on to other parts of living, perhaps to other work. I might garden. I think while I garden. Something I need to write often suggests itself while I'm planting seeds or pulling weeds or raking ground smoother for planting. Gardening is growth. Writing is growth.

I write a lot, even if I'm not satisfied with what I write, even if it seems to be garbage, garbage, garbage. I don't wait for perfection before committing words to paper (or to the computer screen). As I accumulate more and more unfinished pieces, I have more and more to look back at and to revise toward perfection.

When I've written and have run out of motivation to write further for the moment, I read what I've written and ask, "Is this what I meant to write?"

Usually, the answer is "No. It isn't what I meant to write, but it approaches what I meant to write, and now I have something to study, so I can see how it falls short, so I can see how I can improve it so it's closer to what I meant to write."

A long time ago, years ago, I wrote this essay you're reading. I've revised it many times. It sat dormant long times, until I came to it again and worked on it for a while and then left it dormant for a while again. It's far different from when I first began to work on it.

It may be finished now. I certainly won't guarantee that. I might be satisfied with it. I won't guarantee that, either. It's here though, for now, something to look at tomorrow or next week or next month to see if further revisions come to mind or if I want to use it as it is. It's here even if I'm not completely sure I've done everything I need to do with it, because someone might find something in it that helps guide them toward where they want to go.