

Communication 4312 -- So You Want to Be a Writer

An unofficial, unscientific assessment

1. You've got to be smart. That is, maybe not super intelligent. But you've got to have smarts. You got to know stuff – lots of stuff. Lots of incidental stuff. You've got to know old stuff and new stuff.
2. You've got to read a lot. That is, be well-read. Have reading projects in the works all the time. Read for enjoyment, but also read to learn. [Be ready in the job interview when you are asked what you are reading.]
3. Personality. You've got to have some of it. Okay, so not every writer has a sterling personality. The good thing about personality is that it's not too late to work on yours. If you can develop a positive personality you will discover that it is a great asset.
4. Make friends. You're going to discover as you go through life that you will need as many friends as you can acquire. Funny how friends lead to job opportunities, to social contacts and even in some instances to finding someone to share your life with.
5. Find a mentor, or mentors. You're going to need at least one and maybe several mentors. This is someone who will follow your development and be available to counsel you on various aspects of the profession and on life in general.
6. Oh, and along the way learn to write. Learn to write very well. Do everything you can possibly do to achieve this. Take courses in writing and in literature. And read constantly. Read newspapers, magazines, books. Be conscious of the fact that this is a lifelong endeavor.
7. Be very good at the language. Learn to talk well. Use the objective case properly. Know *lie/lay* and *sit/set*. Learn the proper use of *whom*. And what a collective noun is. Know what a predicate nominative is: *It is I*. Know the difference in *anxious* and *eager*. It's a historic.....
8. Be interested in people. Learn to talk with people and to interview them. Learn to listen, to pay attention, to see things others may miss, to hear what people are saying.
9. Learn social graces. Be polite. Say yes sir and no sir. Say please and thank you. Send people a note thanking them for whatever. Avoid confrontations. Be generous with praise and stingy with criticism.