



ARDITH'S NOTEBOOK

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Editorial

Revision vs. Rewrite

In the revision stage you try to make your writing coherent, clear and effective. Clumsy sentences become graceful, cliches become wit, muddled action becomes drama. You should always write with courage and confidence, because you can go back to your story and cut weak parts and expand the strong ones. Do not be afraid to write your first draft.

It is good to always save your first draft. If you cut too much you can always go back and recover that section.

There is a difference between revision and rewrite. In revision you rearrange passages, condense sentences, add here and there, but you probably leave large chunks of text close to the original. In rewrite, you take a look at what you did in the original and tackle it differently, from scratch, not even necessarily looking at the original draft again.

People often say that they have rewritten something ten times, they probably have played around with the original text several times. For better or worse, few people do a complete rewrite of their work anymore. However, many people arrange and rearrange their passages and tinker with the original draft.

It is easier to write clean sentences and paragraphs, but perhaps harder to get rid of the larger structural problems, because it's easy to remain within the initial faulty structure of a draft. A lot of this has to do with word processing programs. In the past a writer using a typewriter would pretty quickly have a messy manuscript with a little bit of revision. To get a clean copy they would have to retype the entire story or book. While retyping they would take an opportunity to rewrite their work. Word processing programs don't give the writer the same opportunity.

Here's a way to get a clean rewrite. Write your original draft, print it off, then delete it from your hard drive. Through this method you will make sure you get at least one rewrite as opposed to a series of tinkering.

In the first rewrite, you want to see the story forming out of the first draft mass of words. In every draft there is a story desperately trying to get out. Carefully read your first draft before undertaking a rewrite. Identify the major conflict, scene and plot. Outline the plot. Find the story's big moments, by knowing where they occur, you save yourself a lot of work because you will build your narration on a strong foundation.

Once you've decided where your major scenes are, begin your rewrite. Expand the scenes. Let the characters act, speak, move in the setting. Keep in mind, you don't need to accomplish everything right now, since you will have time to revise.

Don't worry about spelling, diction, cliché or other minute matters. After you finish these rough rewrites of the major moments, provide transitions and backgrounds between the big scenes.

Read your rewrite, proofing against the plot outline. Whatever seems useless or weak, cut. Be open to any changes that suggest themselves as you are rewriting. This is called scene-oriented rewrite.

Ebooks

Ebook Readers

Authors and publishers can no longer afford to ignore ebooks, as they are a rapidly growing segment of the publishing industry, thanks in large part to recent developments regarding devices dedicated to displaying ebooks, in addition to easy access to ebook stores.

Amazon's Kindle Leads the Way

The Kindle has become Amazon's number one selling product. Kindle ebooks outsold paperbound books on Amazon during Christmas 2009, a first in the company's history. The base model sells for \$259.

Apple's New iPad

Fervent worldwide buzz surrounded the recent release of the iPad. Compared to dedicated ebook readers, the iPad has a larger screen and works well for reading ebooks, watching videos, browsing the Internet, and running various "apps." However, it doesn't have the easy-to-read "E Ink" display featured on most ebook-specific devices. The base model sells for \$499 (US).

Kobo: A Low-Cost Alternative

Chapters Indigo is a major partner with Kobo, a company offering an ebook store that will allow readers to open their ebooks on any device of their choice, including the company's own upcoming Kobo eReader, which resembles the Kindle. However, it will sell for as low as \$149.

Authors on the Web

How a Website Can Help You

So you've written the book, told your friends, and scheduled the launch. Your job's done, right? Not so fast...

Maintaining an online presence is becoming increasingly important for authors as more and more readers turn to the net to decide their next book to read. Here are some things to consider when putting together a web page:

Make sure your contact information is easy to find. Reporters and others from the media work on very tight deadlines: Make it as easy as possible for people to contact you. If you have hired someone to help with your publicity, you might choose to direct people to contact your representative.

A media room where reporters can download author photos, sample chapters, cover images, or fact sheets is often a useful addition to a website. Eliminating the need to contact your office every time promotional materials are required will make you a media favourite!

Use the free social media tools that are available to you. Do you have a blog? Are you on Facebook? Do you tweet? Readers love to interact with authors in real time, so be sure to let them know how they can do it by including that information on your website.

Keep it fresh. Give readers a reason to visit your site over and over again. Make sure to post details about events that you will be holding. Consider holding contests for readers of your website. Prizes don't have to be large—think free books or a fifteen-minute phone call to a book club.

Make it easy for them to buy your book. Link to your book's page at a few online bookstores (Indigo, Amazon). Don't forget to link to your favourite independent bookstore as well!

Workspace

Writing Without Pain

Any tears over your keyboard should come from the power of your words, and not from pain in your arms or back. Sitting in the wrong kind of chair, working in bad light, and even poor typing habits all can cause physical damage, but there are simple steps you can take to ensure that you don't hurt yourself at your desk.

First of all, your workstation should be set up so that you don't suffer back strain. Have an adjustable chair, in good repair, and make sure the back is at a 120-degree angle to the seat to give your lower back the support it needs. A good chair will also have a 5cm lumbar backrest. You can also use a rolled towel or a separate back support. Adjust the height of the chair and the arm rests so that your wrists are straight out, "floating" above the keyboard and, again, your elbows are bent at about a 90-degree ("right") angle to your body. Use a wrist rest in front of your keyboard if the height is uncomfortable.

Sitting on your chair, your feet should be flat on the floor or a footrest and your knees should be bent at that magic 90-degree angle. And, if your chair is on rollers or swivels, make sure it's not going to slide awkwardly, wrenching your back. A little jolt can end up causing permanent damage if your spine is at all weak in the first place.

Next, your desk should be placed side on to a window so that the sun isn't in your eyes or shining directly onto your computer screen. Your eyes should be about 18-24 inches away from the screen and roughly level with the top of the screen so you're not craning your neck up or down.

For copy-typing, use a copyholder attached to the right of your screen. That way you don't end up looking down and straining your neck and shoulders. Your mouse should be easily reached, so you're not straining your shoulder. Some people find a "tracker ball" mouse is more comfortable because it avoids a repetitive, tiny movement of the finger, which can lead to wrist strain. Some people also recommend using key commands where possible to avoid this problem.

Finally, take breaks! At least once an hour, get up and walk around, stretch, have a drink of water, go out for some fresh air, and give your body a rest.

For more information, and for exercises that will promote a strong, healthy back, visit the website of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (www.ccohs.ca)