

Professional Writing – Charting a Course

by: Jo Sparkes / Sparkes Productions

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Don't buy into the idea that the breadth of your success – or the depth of your talent – comes down to money.

Students often speak of writing as if it's one thing – one job. If you are a writer, you should write anything. More over, there's this believe you can't really be a writer until you've been paid to write. And the more you are paid, the better writer you must be.

The word 'writing' actually covers many things.

For fiction writing – that is, telling stories in some manner – you need a story to tell, and the words to express it. A story consists of characters and events. The medium can be a book, a short story, a script for a short clip or full length movie. It can be on the Internet, in a magazine or newspaper, contained in a collection in a book, and so on.

For non-fiction, we get into articles and news stories, as well as documentaries, and yes, books and movies. You can write how to manuals for a company's new sales system, a speech for a local political candidate, or a television ad for a car dealer. Writing includes websites and professional blogging.

I always separate scripts from other forms, because most forms of writing are intended for their final audience. Scripts are blueprints intended for other artists, who will in turn build the final product that the audience sees.

To be successful at one sort of writing does not necessarily mean success at all of them.

It's sort of a two-step process. First, chart your boat. Where do you wish to end up? Writing big movie scripts, or bestselling novels? Do you want to be a beat reporter, or sit at home earning a good living freelancing?

Whatever goal you wish to reach, you need to take aim and fire. Sitting around dreaming is a first step, the 'ready' part. Not a viable plan.

The second part is pushing that boat off from shore. It is indeed a journey, and the currents and eddies may well take you to places you hadn't expected. But you won't get anywhere if you never set out.

Finally, the best paddle for that boat is honing your craft. Getting better at what you want to do. It is not necessarily making money at doing it.

People have left good-paying jobs to write – planning to work on their novel in the morning and get paid to write in the afternoon – only to find themselves writing for peanuts. And never writing that novel because they're working three part time jobs. Would it have been better to keep the high-paying job and start with writing classes at night?

You don't have to give up current careers to move into professional writing. And, frankly, not all professional writing is what you really want.

NOTE: We welcome your thoughts. Discussions are key to exploration and understanding. Just be aware that when your thoughts include 'Online Pharmacy!' links, they may be deleted without being read.

[Jo Sparkes
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