



Broad Editing and Services

Writers' Corner Solving Writers' Block Word-Driven Stories and Poems

By M Broadhurst © 2007

When writer's block grips you and you find yourself staring at a blank page, think of three words and write them on top of your page. They can be any type of word. Look around for ideas, perhaps something in the room you're in, or something outside? Alternatively, open a dictionary or another book at any page and choose a word, flick to another page and pick another word, and the same again for the third word.



- Pick any three words
- Write a story or poem, which includes the three words
- Don't ram all three words into the first paragraph, take your time
- Let your story or poem flow

If you're still stuck for words then pick from the list provided:

- Fire, clock, sun
- Reaction, lake, mermaid
- Brown, restless, tree
- Business, pauper, crude
- Vehicle, smile, tissue

Create a story/poem using your chosen words. Take your time; you don't have to ram all three words into the first paragraph. Allow yourself to get swept away with the flow.

Here is an example using the chosen words 'fire', 'clock' and 'sun':

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The clock's mechanisms and its shattered glass face spread across the floor along with a smashed ceramic jug and other scattered items. Drawers hung from their tracks with the contents tossed to the ground or missing. Sandy stood frozen to the spot, only feet from the entrance. The keys clanked together as they dangled from her trembling hand. She forced the terror down and stepped further into her home. A knocked over lamp added to the clutter along with papers, knick-knacks and other personal items, nothing remained in its correct place. She crept through each room peering around door frames, and trying to control the terror that twisted in her stomach.

She moved quietly through the house and into her bedroom where she found her undergarments tossed like rags across the floor and mingled with shards of glass from the window. Rage boiled through her body; how dare they! What gave anyone the right to invade her home and her privacy? She swiftly moved towards her dressing table, but she was certain of the answer that awaited her; Sandy opened the handcrafted jewellery box. Empty! Her beautiful locket that her grandmother had left her was gone. Her eyes glistened, a single tear slowly ran down her soft pale skin tracking through the powdery makeup and causing a crevice for the rest of the tears to follow as if they were express trains on a track.

Notice one of the chosen words (clock) is in the first paragraph, but the story hasn't been rushed to include all the words.

Word-Driven Stories and Poems cont. From page 1

Sandy hurried back outside and sat down on the step, with trembling hands she dialled the police. The officer took her address and told her not to touch anything. anything. She hung up and closed her eyes; the sun's warmth engulfed her. How could it be such a beautiful day? she wondered, surely it should be cold, dark and wet, and match the dread that had seized her heart.

You may find that you don't wish to use the last word in your list or it might be somewhere near the end of your story/poem, but do you see what has happened? Your page isn't blank any more, ideas are flowing and you have direction, and it's all thanks to three little words.

Try other words to create different stories or mix and match words to create your own combination.

Views on Writing Getting the Most Out of Critiques and Edits

(Reprint Article)

By Jordana Ryan ©

As an author, it's never fun to get your manuscript back with red through all of your precious words. In fact, it's probably one of the worst moments you can have as a writer. Self-doubt can fill you and make you wonder why you ever bothered to write such poor quality stuff. But don't fret. Just because there is a mass of red markings doesn't mean that your work is poor quality.

Other authors are not only your best resource, they are also your best source of support. The life of a writer can be difficult at times, full of ups and downs and the desire to throw in the towel. Chances are if you talk to another author they would not only give you great tips and advice, they will offer you the support and encouragement we all need when we put ourselves out there, as we do when we present our writing.

One way that authors support each other is to review each other's work. A second set of eyes and an objective opinion are always worth having. Too many times, when authors get their manuscripts back they feel discouraged. The one sure way to avoid this is to realise three things:

First: it is one person's opinion.

Second: if you stand back and consider suggestions made, you might see something that you didn't before.

Third: it's a learning experience. Every author should learn something from each critique offered.

As the author, you have complete control over whether you want to make a change in your story or not. When reading someone's assessment of your work, if you don't feel the same about a person's comments just skip it and move on to the next suggestion. If several people make the same suggestion, then you may want to rethink your lack of desire to make a change.

Don't allow personal feelings to prevent you from getting the most out of critiques. It can be difficult when you have worked so hard to perfect a scene and others don't see the perfection that you do. In this case, it is best to take a step back. Don't make changes right away, or close

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Getting the Most Out of Critiques and Edits cont. From page 2

your mind to suggestions made. Give yourself a day or two, keep working, see where your story is going, and then go back and look at the critique once again.

There is a reason that authors write in drafts. First drafts are meant to be changed and torn apart. So are second, third and fourth drafts. A manuscript isn't complete until you, as the author, feel it is what it should be. In each draft that you write, you should learn something about your characters, your setting, your plot and ultimately your writing style. When you allow others to review your draft, allow yourself to learn. Store away ideas, techniques and phrases to use in your revisions.

Keep in mind your goal when reading through another's analysis of your work. You are preparing your manuscript for the biggest reviewers of all – a publisher. It is an author's job to give a publisher the cleanest manuscript possible. Remember when a publisher considers your piece for publication; they will take into account the amount of editing time necessary. If an author has presented a piece that will require an excessive amount of editing, there is a great possibility that the manuscript will be rejected.

Finally, goal achieved, you have received a contract on your manuscript. You may think that the majority of your work is done. The reality is you have only just begun. Once a manuscript is accepted by a publishing company, the next step is for an editor to be assigned. An editor will be nit-picky. They will analyse every word, every comma, sentence structure, phrases and writing style. Your editor's job is to take what you have written and make it the best it can possibly be.

It's not uncommon for the niggling feelings of self-doubt to return when you receive your 'perfected' manuscript back from the editor, once again torn apart. Bear in mind that if your work was not good, it would not have been accepted. An editor is that final set of eyes that will read your work before it goes to publication. They want to make sure that you have a book that will sell.

Once again, when reading an editor's comments look at it from an objective point of view. Talk to other authors who have supported you along the way, and think of an editor's suggestions as help rather than criticism. At this point you still have the power to decide what changes you will and will not make; however, it is in your best interest to strongly consider advice that an editor gives.

Writing is not a field for those without tough skin. Even those with tough skin can fall into the trap of self-criticism when they receive their work marked up beyond recognition. But if you take the time to learn from those red marks, the chances of your next edit being less "bloody" are good. Don't give up! Keep writing, it will keep you motivated despite the less than wonderful feedback you might sometimes receive.

About the Author: Jordana Ryan is the author of the new romance novel, *No Matter What* (Amira Press).

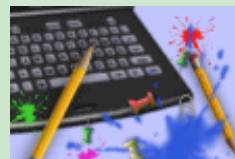
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Résumé Builder:

Benefiting from Goals

By M Broadhurst © 2007

Why have goals?

Goals help us to see what we want to achieve and the necessary steps required to accomplish those goals. They help us to stay on target. It's easy to get caught up in day-to-day activities and responsibilities, and if we're not careful a year has passed and we haven't moved any closer to the things we want. Remember this: time will continue to pass, we are going to continue getting older so you might as well do something productive with that time.

Targets and Goals

Many people have five and/or ten year goals for finances, owning your own home, and even retirement plans so why not use that same useful targeting system for your writing career. I don't come across too many writers who are genuinely excited about working mundane jobs so do something about it.

Depending on what you want to achieve will greatly influence what your goals will be. You need to take into consideration your personality also, some people find it next to impossible to have a ten-year plan, while others may thrive on yearly plans. The idea is to see your ultimate goal and then set the necessary targets to get you there.

Be realistic

While you may dream of becoming a world famous author with a bank account that could put you in the top five of the richest list, you need to be realistic with your goals. What is the first thing you would like to achieve? It may be to write a novel, or a collection of short stories/poems, break into the competition world with significant results, or become a freelancer. Some of these are a little more involved than others, but certainly capable with a little planning and lots of hard work.

How to record your goals

Write down a list of things you wish to achieve in twelve months time – the size of the list will depend on what you want to achieve, for instance, a novel may not allow much time for other written work, whereas 30 short stories could be included with other things. Work out how much time you can dedicate on a weekly basis to make sure you can achieve the goal in the specified time. Jobs that have not been fulfilled in the given time can leave you feeling depressed so a little pre-thought can help avoid such useless emotions.

Your spreadsheet doesn't need to be elaborate, but include the following information:

- Start date
- Goal/s to be achieved
- Intended finish date

Record book

Keep an exercise book where you can record what you need to work on for that day or week in order to achieve your goals. It's a good idea to separate it into two, the first is dedicated on what you need to focus on, such as researching a point, or spending a certain amount of time on writing, or working on characters. The other section contains things that occur to you that you don't want to forget, but might not have time to accomplish that week. If you do finish with your focus points and still have more time then you can pick one of the other jobs from the second part of your recording system.

When you're ready to write up your next week's targets, refer to the previous records and move things from the other section that you might want to focus on this week. A few minutes spent on organising your time can save you countless hours. No more thinking: What will I do now? You'll know what you will do next because it's listed in front of you.

'It's easy to get caught up in day-to-day activities and responsibilities, and if we're not careful a year has passes and we haven't moved any closer to the things we want.'

Benefiting from Goals cont. From page 4

Example of a record book:

Aim: Write a novel in 12 months	Targets set for week: 01/09/07 to 07/09/07
Focus Points:	Rewrite chapter 3 taking workshopping comments into consideration Workshop draft of chapter 4
Other Jobs:	Research period costumes Research language/dialogue of period Work on writing first draft of chapter 5



Constant reminders

Besides the main spreadsheet, keep a smaller version handy so that you can refer to it wherever you may be. Keep it in your purse/wallet or laminate it, punch a hole in the corner and attach it to your key ring. This acts as a constant reminder of where you want to be.

Sentence Starter ...

Many writers suffer the 'blank page' complex; therefore, each month we will supply you with a first sentence. Now your page isn't blank any more. Let your imagination take you on a journey.

This issue's sentence starter:

He lurked between the bushes keeping to the shadows, hiding whenever ...

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