GENERAL

lorrie moore how to become a writer

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How to Become a Writer – Lessons from Lorrie Moore

Every aspiring writer has a question that lingers at the back of their mind: **“How do I become a writer?”**The path to a writing career is rarely a straight line; it’s a winding road filled with practice, perseverance, and a little bit of inspiration. One writer who has quietly shaped the minds of countless dreamers is Lorrie Moore. Her sharp wit, lyrical prose, and relentless curiosity make her an ideal case study for anyone looking to turn their passion for words into a professional vocation.

In this guide we’ll explore the practical steps you can take to start writing, refine your craft, and build a career, all while drawing from the techniques and habits that have made Lorrie Moore a celebrated voice in contemporary literature.

Who is Lorrie Moore?

Lorrie Moore, born in 1956, is a Pulitzer prize winning American writer known for her short stories, essays, and novels. She earned her MFA from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, and her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and countless literary journals. Moore’s stories are celebrated for their humor, emotional depth, and a keen sense of the absurdities of everyday life.

Beyond her accolades, Moore’s writing process is a treasure trove for anyone eager to learn how to become a writer. She often speaks about the importance of listening to the world, allowing stories to emerge organically, and embracing the messy, iterative nature of revision.

Why Study Lorrie Moore’s Path?

- Authentic Voice: Moore’s stories are unmistakably hers—no mimicry, no forced diction. She teaches us that authenticity is the cornerstone of compelling writing.
- Commitment to Practice: She writes daily, treating each session like a rehearsal for a play. This consistency is a model for building a sustainable writing habit.
- Embracing Revision: Moore acknowledges that the first draft is just the beginning. Her iterative approach shows that revision is not a chore but a creative act.
- Community Engagement: From workshops to literary circles, Moore values feedback and collaboration, reminding us that writing is both solitary and communal.

The First Step: Cultivate a Reading Habit

Before you can write, you must read. Lorrie Moore’s own reading list spans from classic literature to contemporary essays. Here’s how to turn reading into a springboard for writing:

1. Set a Daily Goal: Aim for 30 minutes of reading each day. Mix fiction, non-fiction, and poetry to broaden your perspective.
2. Keep a Reading Journal: Note passages that resonate, unfamiliar words, and emotional reactions. This practice sharpens your analytical eye.
3. Analyze Structure: Pay attention to how authors build scenes, develop characters, and manage pacing. Look

for patterns that you can later emulate.

4. Read Critically: Ask questions: What's the central conflict? How does the narrator's voice influence the story? This critical lens trains you to think like a writer.

Step Two: Start Writing Every Day

Consistency is the lifeblood of writing. Even a handful of words per day can accumulate into a manuscript over time.

- Set a Time Slot: Choose a time that's least likely to be interrupted—early morning, late night, or during a lunch break.
- Use a Prompt: If you're stuck, a prompt can ignite creativity. For example: "Write a scene where a character discovers a secret message in an old photograph."
- Don't Edit While Writing: Let the words flow. Revision will come later.
- Track Your Progress: Use a simple spreadsheet or a writing app to log word counts, dates, and topics.

How to Overcome Writer's Block

Writer's block is inevitable. Lorrie Moore advises to treat it as a natural pause rather than a failure.

1. Shift Medium: Try typing instead of handwriting, or switch from prose to a journal entry.
2. Change Environment: A new coffee shop or a quiet park can reset your creative rhythm.
3. Micro Tasks: Break writing into 10 minute bursts. Completing a short task often propels you forward.
4. Talk It Out: Explain your idea out loud; sometimes vocalizing sparks insight.

Step Three: Hone Your Craft Through Structured Learning

While reading and writing lay the foundation, structured learning refines your skills. Here are ways to develop your craft, inspired by Moore's educational journey:

Enroll in a Writing Program

Consider an MFA or a short-term writing course. Moore's MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop is a prime example of how formal training can provide:

- Professional mentorship from established authors.
- Peer feedback through workshops.
- Time dedicated solely to writing.

Attend Workshops and Seminars

Workshops provide a safe space to experiment and receive constructive criticism. Look for local writing groups or online workshops that focus on the genre you're interested in.

Read Writing Guides

Books like *The Elements of Style* by Strunk & White, *On Writing* by Stephen King, and *Writing Down the Bones*by Natalie Goldberg offer practical advice that complements your practice.

Step Four: Develop Your Unique Voice

Lorrie Moore's voice is unmistakably hers—often humorous, deeply empathetic, and unafraid of irony. Cultivating your voice involves:

1. Experiment with Tone: Try writing in different styles—formal, informal, sarcastic—to discover what feels natural.

2. Use Personal Experience: Draw from your own life. Authenticity comes from honest reflection.
3. Read Your Work Aloud: Hearing the rhythm and flow can reveal inconsistencies in voice.
4. Seek Feedback: Ask trusted readers to describe what they hear in your writing. Does it sound like you?

Step Five: Master the Revision Process

Revision is where the magic happens. Moore often emphasizes that the first draft is merely a skeleton. Here's a practical revision strategy:

1. Take a Break: Step away for a few days. Fresh eyes catch errors you missed.
2. Read Like a Reader: Focus on clarity, pacing, and emotional impact rather than grammar.
3. Use Revision Checklists: Address plot holes, character inconsistencies, and narrative flow.
4. Incorporate Feedback: Integrate constructive criticism from beta readers or editors.
5. Polish Language: Tighten sentences, eliminate filler, and choose precise diction.

Step Six: Build a Writing Portfolio

A portfolio showcases your best work and demonstrates your range. For those following Lorrie Moore's path, a portfolio might include:

- Short stories (published or unpublished).
- Essays or feature articles.
- Poetry or experimental pieces.
- Works submitted to literary journals.

Use an online platform like a personal website or a writing portfolio service. Keep the design clean and the navigation intuitive.

Step Seven: Submit to Literary Journals and Contests

Publishing in respected literary outlets is a key milestone. Moore's stories first appeared in journals like *The New Yorker* and *Ploughshares*. To emulate this trajectory:

1. Research Target Publications: Look for journals that align with your genre and style.
2. Follow Submission Guidelines: Pay close attention to word limits, formatting, and required materials.
3. Prepare a Cover Letter: Introduce yourself briefly and state why your piece fits the journal.
4. Track Submissions: Keep a spreadsheet to note dates, responses, and outcomes.
5. Accept Rejection Gracefully: Use rejection as a learning tool and keep refining.

Writing Contests

Contests can provide exposure and sometimes a monetary prize. Look for reputable contests with a track record of publishing winners. Ensure the prize is legitimate and the terms are clear.

Step Eight: Network Within the Writing Community

Writing is often perceived as a solitary endeavor, but community support can be invaluable.

- Join Writing Groups: Local or online groups provide peer feedback and accountability.
- Attend Literary Events: Book readings, author panels, and writing conferences expand your network.
- Leverage Social Media: Platforms like Twitter or LinkedIn can connect you with editors, agents, and fellow writers.
- Seek Mentorship: A seasoned writer can offer guidance, critique, and encouragement.

Step Nine: Consider a Professional Path

Once you have a solid portfolio and a few publications, you can explore professional opportunities:

1. Freelance Writing: Contribute to magazines, blogs, or corporate content.
2. Teaching: Offer writing workshops or courses at community colleges or online platforms.
3. Editing: Use your skills to edit others' work, which can deepen your understanding of the craft.
4. Publishing a Book: Compile your stories into a collection or work on a novel.

Finding an Agent

Agents can open doors to larger publishing houses. To approach an agent:

- Research agents who represent your genre.
- Prepare a query letter that includes a hook, a brief bio, and a synopsis.
- Follow submission guidelines meticulously.

Step Ten: Maintain Balance and Self Care

Writing can be emotionally demanding. Moore's own essays often touch on the fragility of the human experience. Keep your creative well being in check by:

- Setting realistic deadlines to avoid burnout.
- Scheduling breaks and leisure activities.
- Practicing mindfulness or meditation to clear mental clutter.
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle—exercise, balanced diet, sufficient sleep.

Conclusion

Becoming a writer is a journey that blends disciplined practice, continuous learning, and an authentic voice. Lorrie Moore's career exemplifies how a writer can grow from a curious reader to a celebrated author by staying true to oneself, embracing the iterative nature of writing, and engaging with the literary community. By following the steps outlined above—reading widely, writing daily, refining your craft, building a portfolio, seeking publication, and nurturing your well being—you can transform your passion into a sustainable writing career.

Remember, the path to becoming a writer is as much about the process as it is about the destination. Keep writing, keep learning, and let your unique story unfold.

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