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But, we are constantly striving to get better," Dr Stuart Minchin said.From Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus, Third Edition Copyright © 2013 by the Philip Lief Group.Browse#aabbcdddeeffghhijjkkllmmnnnooppqrrssttuuvvwwxyzzAboutCareersContact usCookies, terms, & privacyHelpFollow usGet the Word of the Day every day!© 2025 Dictionary.com, LLC We want to let you in on a secret: improving your writing skills is not as hard as you think. Sure, maybe you've written a few questionable essays or botched a short story here and there. That's okay. The road to amazing writing is paved with typos, sentence fragments, and underwhelming first drafts. The key is to keep working on it. Few writers achieve perfection the second they start typing words on the page. Writing is often called a practice for a reason: it requires regular effort. No matter what kind of writing you do, the way that you can become better at it is through practicing regularly and challenging yourself. Whether you're trying to write a paragraph or 200 pages, here are 12 things you can do right away to improve your writing. Before you start writing 1. Get clear on your concept. Thinking is a big part of writing. What are you trying to say? What is the best way to say it? Those are important questions to ask yourself before you ever put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard). As you prepare to start your next assignment or work in progress, consider: What questions will my readers have? How has this subject been written about before? How do I want to structure my writing? Do I have a clear thesis or plot? What is the theme or main idea I want to convey? 2. Make an outline. Outlines can help you write with direction and purpose, for anything from a short story to an academic paper. Of course, how you outline something totally depends on your personal writing style. Some folks outline each main idea, chapter, or story beat, along with all of the supporting details, while others prefer simple notes or a mind map. Experiment to find the method that works best for you. Writing a story? Then outlining your characters' personal traits—using this guide—is a smart move. 3. Research. Whether you write fiction or nonfiction, your work probably involves research. Consider making that research a part of your pre-writing checklist. Doing research ahead of time not only helps you think through your work more thoroughly, but it will also decrease the number of times you have to interrupt your workflow to look things up later on. While you're writing 4. Keep it conversational. Writing is more engaging when it reads like it was written by a person, not a robot. It might be tempting to sprinkle your sentences with SAT vocabulary words, but think about it from the reader's point of view. Simple, compelling, and clear sentences make their role easier. Conversational writing usually includes: Take a look at the difference between these two sentences: Technical: There have been 46 United States presidents throughout history, and respondents to a national survey indicate that Abraham Lincoln was the best one. Conversational: Out of the 46 presidents who've served the US so far, most people's favorite is Abraham Lincoln, a national survey finds. 5. Don't be a perfectionist. A lot of great writing happens through editing, so use the first draft of anything you write as an opportunity to get your ideas out and figure out what you're really trying to say. Once you've finished the first take, you can re-read it and tighten sentences, perfect the grammar, and edit for clarity. As author Jodi Picoult once said, "You might not write well every day, but you can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page." 6. Watch out for weak words. Even though you'll edit later, try not to fall back on common writer weaknesses, like using too many adverbs or filler words. These tend to weaken your writing, and there's almost always a better word you can use instead. If you're stuck, use Thesaurus.com to look up synonyms and choose the most concise word. Here are some examples of weak words to cut from your writing: really very certainly extremely simply basically essentially literally quite completely totally absolutely Give readers enough information to understand your article or story, but don't overwhelm them with too many facts and details. If you find yourself getting overly technical or describing things with extreme specification, step back and ask yourself: what's the most important thing here? Look at each detail you've provided and decide if it's essential information or not. If it isn't? Delete! 8. Use a writing tool. The internet is a useful tool for lots of things, and writing is no exception. If you want extra help writing your best work, check out an online writing tool. A virtual writing assistant can highlight common grammar and spelling errors and suggest alternatives to weak language as you're writing. It's like having an editor looking over your shoulder, without the annoying invasion of personal space. After you write 9. Read it out loud. Reading your work out loud is the easiest way to catch grammar mistakes, awkward language, and sneaky flow issues. If you stumble over sentences, your readers probably will, too. Reading your work out loud gives you a chance to fix those errors before they make it to the final draft. It might feel a bit weird reading to your cat, your roommate, or your empty bedroom, but your future readers will appreciate the quality results. 10. Line edit. Slow down, and re-read your work with intention. Go sentence by sentence to see if each one is the strongest it can possibly be. As you read each line, ask yourself: Are there words that can be cut? Does the reader need more information? Is the sentence too long or too short? Is this sentence engaging to read? Be sure your sentence lengths vary to create a nice flow to your writing. If you notice any extra-long sentences as you line edit, see if you can break them up. Get more proofreading tips here! 11. Get feedback. Yes, it's hard to share your writing with other people, especially in the early stages. But getting feedback from others is an important tool for growth as a writer. When other people read your work, they can help you spot things you may have missed, whether it's errors, unnecessary repetition, or even just parts that don't make sense to them. They can also offer unique perspectives that help make the piece stronger and more universally appealing. 12. Keep practicing. Writing is a process, and you learn more with each attempt. If you want to get better at writing, it's important to keep practicing. Create as many opportunities to write as possible, whether it's using writing prompts or participating in challenges, like NaNoWriMo. Establish a daily writing practice, like journaling before bed or writing for 20 minutes each morning. Every time you write, it will get easier. Before long, you'll be the one giving writing advice! 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