

IMPROVE YOUR WRITING



Do you find that you keep on receiving the same marks for your written work, no matter how much time you spend working on a project? Are your marks for written work lower than you'd like them to be? Would you like to be a better writer but don't know how to improve your writing skills? Here are some tips that you might want to try:

Be open to suggestions:

As difficult as it is to take criticism, it can sometimes be very helpful.

Your teachers' comments are often a very good place to start. Read the comments they put on your papers; they were put there for a reason! Go and talk to them about your writing directly. While you should always listen to the general points your teachers stress in class, talking to them personally could prove to be a lot more helpful. There is a limit to how specific a teacher can get about your writing in front of a class of forty people.

Talk to your friends who are serious about writing. Let them read your drafts. See how they react to your writing. Their honest reactions can be helpful in identifying your strong and weak points.

Talk to published authors. They are often able to give advice to young writers. They were once students too and as professional writers, their comments can prove to be useful.

Rewrite:

The saying "practice makes perfect" applies to writing. Don't be afraid to rewrite what you've written. It takes time, experience and practice to improve writing. As tiring as it may be, revising does bring about results. Using a computer makes the revising process a lot easier. Be careful, though, not to allow yourself to become detached from what's on the screen. Sometimes looking at a print-out can help to remedy this.

Try your hand at rewriting other things besides your own words. Attempt to put advertisements and articles in your own words. Rewrite the endings (or beginnings) of movies and novels. It's good experience and can give you a break from rewriting your own work.

Take advantage of opportunities:

Make an effort to attend writing workshops. You'll have an opportunity to practise writing and to meet other writers. The chance to meet other people and the advice you'll receive makes the effort worthwhile.

Enter writing contests. They're one of the best ways to get feedback on your writing. They're also an incentive for writers who need more discipline and structure.

Keep a Journal:

If you're short on time and want an easy and effective way to practice writing, consider keeping a journal or diary. It provides you with a forum to express yourself if you're shy about having others see your work. Writing in it regularly will give you consistent practice and when you look back over it, you may be able to note any recurring errors. You also don't have to feel pressure to find a plot or a story line when writing in your journal. You can simply describe your day and your thoughts.

Using a journal can also help you to find a mode of expression in which you feel comfortable. You should never feel tied to using only one form of expression. Use your journal to explore other means and styles of writing, such as poetry, newspaper writing, narratives, descriptions, play writing, etc.

Read:

Almost all authors will tell you that they have been influenced or inspired by another author. You can learn from the literary contributions of the past as well as more modern ones. By reading classics you'll be exposed to alternative styles, which may stimulate your own sense of creativity.

Vocabulary:

Having a wide vocabulary is essential if one is to be a successful writer. Always strive to increase the number of words you are able to use in your writing. Simply owning a thesaurus will not improve your vocabulary dramatically. You have to know where and when new words can be used intelligently, and this only comes from reading and practice.

Have patience:

Writing takes time. It is an extremely rare occurrence for brilliance to be dashed off the night before a deadline. Take your time and work at your writing. A good rule of thumb is to leave any final piece of writing for twenty-four hours and to then go back to it. By that time you may have changed your point of view and you'll be able to look at your work with a new perspective.