



December 2010

The writer's computer: Part 1

You've heard the horror stories from friends and family: A misplaced glass of water or a power surge leading to wiped-out hard drives and months of lost work. Don't let this happen to you!

Solutions exist to back up your files and work, whether it be an external hard drive that you keep on your desk or online backup software that stores your information off-site. [Apple's Time Machine](#) or [Carbonite.com](#) allow you to set up regularly scheduled backups so that you don't even need to think about the process.

Let's hope your computer makes it through its life without ever being damaged, but if the unfortunate should happen, having backups in place will really soften the blow and save you the hassle of restoring all of your data from scratch.

Adverbs and adjectives: How many is too many?

When using verbs and nouns, pay attention to how you treat them. Are you constantly modifying them? Are your characters always saying things "angrily" or "sarcastically"? Are your settings always "dark," "bright," or "dim"? Do a quick audit. How many verbs and nouns do you modify this way? If your answer is "most," you may want to consider revising your text.

Relying too much on these modifying words can break a reader's concentration, which will pull them out of your textual world. Adverbs and adjectives are decorative words, and too many decorations can spoil the scene. There are two solutions to this.

First, try using Hemmingway-like simplicity in your text. Just write “he said” or “he walked.” There’s no need to explain how if you let your dialogue, action, and scene-building do the talking and let the reader use their imagination.

Second, try using language that is more accurate or evocative in the first place. Instead of “he said angrily,” try “he spat” or “he said as he clenched his fists.” Instead of “it was a dark and gloomy morning,” try being metaphoric instead: “the clouds that morning were promising rain.”

Writing groups

The image of a novelist scribbling away in isolation—maybe in a threadbare garret, maybe on a laptop in a coffee shop—is a popular one, but the truth is that many writers actually belong to groups and meet regularly with their colleagues to discuss works in progress.

Joining up with other like-minded people can be a great way to keep going on a project if you feel you’ve lost your way; it can also give you a dose of reality when you think something sounds great when you read it aloud in front of your mirror....

If you live in a major city, there are bound to be dozens of groups to choose from. If you live in a smaller place, check out the local bookstore or library to see if there’s a writers’ group to join. If not, consider starting one yourself. At the very least, you’ll meet some new friends and it could provide just the inspiration you need to finish your book.

Resource List

[The Canadian Authors Association](#): A national organization for writers.

[Federation of BC Writers](#): Lists writing groups meeting all over British Columbia.

[Writers Guild of Alberta](#): Lists critique groups for all kinds of writing in Alberta.

[Saskatchewan Writers' Guild](#): Offers a weekly e-newsletter with notices about writers groups.

[Manitoba Writers' Guild](#): A resource for all things literary in Manitoba.

[Open Book Toronto](#): Your source for all things lit related in Toronto.

[Toronto Public Library](#): Has a list of writing groups at various branches around the GTA.

[Quebec Writers' Federation](#): Anglophone writers in Quebec network here.

[Writers' Federation of New Brunswick](#): Promotes literature in New Brunswick with groups, events, awards, and more.

[Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia](#): Resources, events, and information.

[Newfoundland Writers' Guild](#): Groups, competitions, e-zines and more for writers on the Rock.

[Prince Edward Island Writers' Guild](#): Online meeting place for island writers.

[Living Traditions Writers Group](#): Encouraging writing in First Nations across Canada.

[OUT writes](#): Queer positive writing group meets in central Toronto.



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