



**June 2013**

## **Reading your work in public**

Whether you're reading to a festival audience of hundreds or a more intimate group at a bookstore or pub, here are a few tips to help you have fun and engage your listeners.

Find out how much time you have and stick to the time limit. Less is more, and the audience will ask if they want more. This is especially important if you're sharing a stage with other authors. The event's organizer will tell you how long you have to read. Pick a piece or a passage that fits, or is slightly shorter. While you're practicing, time yourself and remember that you will be reading more slowly from the stage than you might ordinarily.

Choose your material to fit the audience and the event. Have an alternative piece prepared just in case the passage you've chosen turns out to be unsuitable for some reason.

Be prepared. Know exactly what you're going to read and mark it in your reading copy. Mark the pauses and emphases you want to include. You don't need to read it exactly as it's written: you may want to remove unnecessary detail or add a few words to explain something for clarity. Practice reading to an audience if possible. Record yourself to work on posture, eye contact, volume, and speed.

Check the stage's lighting and sound beforehand, if possible, to ensure that you can see your pages and know how to pitch your voice.

Be comfortable. If you're comfortable and confident, your audience will be too. Choose clothes and shoes that feel good; put some friendly faces in the front row if you can.

...but not too comfortable. Save the alcohol for after the reading....

Be friendly and polite. Make eye contact with your audience. Briefly explain the context of the material if necessary. Thank your host, fellow readers, and the venue. If you're sharing a bill with other authors, stay for their readings as well. Don't insist on a particular place in the lineup: respect the organizers' choices.

## **Fuelling the muse**

Writers find their inspiration from a variety of places. However, staring at a blank screen—cursor blinking—has not been known to help fingers fly across keyboards. Here are some tips for getting the creative juices flowing.





Do something else. Rather than spending eight hours a day in front of the computer, hoping for the muse to pay a visit, step away. Paint your deck, do the laundry, go to the movies. It may seem counterintuitive, but the best ideas often strike us during these in-between times.

Get some exercise. Physical activity is a great cure for when we're feeling down. Go for a run, take a long hike, or go to a yoga class. Exercise will give you renewed energy, give you confidence, and clear your mind.

Spend time with other writers. Whether it's by joining a writers' group or spending time curled up with a book, good writing encourages good writing. Consider attending the next conference in your area. Not only will it give you the opportunity to network with other writers, you'll probably learn tips and tricks to renew your daily writing practice.

Just write. It may not be very good, and you may not be happy with how it turns out, but you can't avoid writing forever. Think outside the box: create point form lists, charts, and character webs, or write free flow. Turn off your inner critic and return to what got you interested in writing in the first place.

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The freedom to publish

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Our mailing address is:  
520 Princess Avenue. London, Ontario, N6B 2B8

Our telephone:  
1-877-288-0114

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