

The 3 Magic Tools That Will Take You From Aspiring Writer to Successful Author

Are you an *aspiring* writer? You know there's a book inside of you, but you're still waiting for "the right time" to start it? Or maybe you've written a few paragraphs, or even a few chapters...and you stopped, because you're not a "real" writer. Maybe you thought about joining a writing group, but you never showed up, or you went once and dropped out. You have great story ideas, but the idea of telling people you're a writer seems like a HUGE leap.

If you're honest with yourself, the real reason you've never pursued writing is that the odds of success seem so small. There's the massive difficulty of simply finishing a book: long hours, writer's block, and solitude. If you're lucky enough to get your book done, you now face barriers to entry in the conventional publishing realm, incredible competition in the self-publishing universe, and a whole world of distractions out there that might prevent readers from finding your book. Better to just give up now, right?

Wrong. That story is there, inside of you, and if it doesn't come out, it's gonna suck. You're going to be disappointed in yourself. Your friends will be disappointed. Readers will be missing out on what could have been their favorite book.

Yes, writing is really hard. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it, because finishing a book is an amazing feeling. But it's not impossible to do, for anyone who wants to do it. Maybe you've been thinking of writing as a "someday" activity for you. Right now isn't the perfect time, so you're giving yourself a break, with the intention of circling back eventually to see if your story is still there, calling to you... If you're still reading this, I think you may have the feeling that you want to start writing sooner rather than later. If you started writing TODAY, by tomorrow you would already be further along than you are right now.

If you've been watching any of my videos or looking at any of my posts of other information on the Spalmorum website, you may know that the three pillars of the Spalmorum Method are:

- Information
- Inspiration
- Motivation

No, those aren't the three magic tools. Those pillars of the Spalmorum Method are there for people who have already made the decision to be a writer. Sure, there are days when they're feeling less confident and put everything back into question, but by and large, they know that being a writer is what they were put on this planet to do. If you have even a sneaking suspicion that you were meant to be a writer, too, don't let anyone, least of all yourself, try to talk you out of it.

Think you don't sound like an author, or look how an author is somehow supposed to look, or that you don't have the natural talent that authors must possess? Authors are individuals. They're all different.

Except that, in general, all successful authors have one MAJOR thing in common: whether they realize it or not, they've employed the 3 MAGIC TOOLS.

What are the 3 Magic Tools? They are:

Attitude

Accountability

Action

What? That's it? Those are the magic tools? But they're super simple! Too simple!

Yes, they sound simple, but they're actually super powerful. If you adopt these tools wholeheartedly, they will make the difference that will transform you from someone who dreams of writing, to someone who is a successful author. Like magic.

Really take time to focus on what these three terms really mean. So many people will take a piece of advice, and never really stop to think what it really entails, or they'll think, "got it." But they won't follow that advice to the letter. This is why even the best advice won't help most people.

A little while back, I was watching a Master Class by Usher, one of the great performers of our time. The class was on how to perform, and truthfully, I was watching it because it seemed to be an impossible subject to actually teach, and I wanted to see how he was going to try to do it. Usher's advice boiled down to:

“Do your best.”

At first, I scoffed at this. Of course. I'd been right: it's almost impossible to teach performance. And Usher had taken the easy way out with some lame and general advice.

But then I really thought about it. It was *brilliant* advice. *Magical*, even. However, of all the people who watched that Master Class, I doubt that many, if any, actually fully acted on that advice. And that's why Usher is Usher, and a huge majority of people are still sitting there watching other people succeed over and over, wondering how they did it, instead of changing their loser mindset and getting out there and actually doing their BEST.

Same goes for our three magic tools. If you truly adopt the ATTITUDE we outline here, your mindset will be transformed in ways that set you up for writing success. However, without the next tool, ACTION, you won't get anywhere. All that great attitude will be wasted! As for ACCOUNTABILITY, it's there to help you continue to hit your goals, even when your brain is trying to trick you into quitting. It's the thing that guarantees your success.

Ready? Let's take a deep dive!

ATTITUDE

You've all heard or seen the simple definition of a writer: “a person who writes.” Basically, if you say you're an “aspiring writer,” what that really means that you're *thinking* about writing, but not *doing* it. And that sounds crazy, because the physical act of writing has almost zero barriers to entry. You literally only need a pen and paper. No fancy equipment, no expensive training, no delicate instruments that can take years to master...

Still, there are a LOT more people who say they “want to write a book” and are “thinking of writing a book” than people who are actually writing a book or who have written a book. Why is this? Because there are about a million *psychological* barriers to writing. Yes, writing a book can be really, really hard, and the chances of success are truly slim, and all of that can make you not even want to start. But you know what? Hard as writing might be, slim as the chances of writing success might be, people write and succeed at it every day. Why not you? We’re giving you the tools to exponentially increase your chances of success, so why not take them?

First, let’s figure out what your main psychological barrier is. Everyone is different, but these general categories should start to get us close enough to the actual block affecting you. For some of us, it will be a combination of these factors. You’ll need be honest with yourself to identify the specific barriers contributing to the stagnation of your dream, and work towards eliminating them.

We’re talking about a crucial mindset change that allows regular people like you to transition from “aspiring writer” to successful, accomplished author. I’m showing you how to adopt the correct ATTITUDE for becoming a successful author:

a) You don’t know WHAT you want. If you don’t know what you want from your writing, you can’t work towards it. Think about it this way: you may have a GPS, but if you don’t have the address of where you’re going, it can’t help you. Just having a general idea for a story is a great jumping-off point, but it’s not enough. You need to know more about it to make it come alive.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What kind of books do you like to read?
- What is it that you like about them?
- Is this the kind of book you would like to write?
- What is standing in the way of you writing a book like that?
- You’ve written a book- How do you feel when you finish writing it?
- How do you describe it to your friends?
- How does the cover look?
- What are your greatest hopes for this book?
- Who is your ideal reader?
- How do you want your book to make people feel?
- How many readers would you ideally have?
- How will you feel if you never write this book?

-What does success as a writer mean TO YOU? Do you really want to be a WRITER, or do you want the fantasy accoutrements of the bestselling author's lifestyle? Fame? Money? Book signings full of clamoring fans?

b) There are issues keeping you from what you want.

-Time

Several months to a year or even more to write a first draft? No thank you! You're busy! Spending many hours, days, and weeks on edits and rewrites? Whaaat? Ain't nobody got time for that! And even worse, you've heard that agents take their sweet time getting to your precious manuscript, and if you get a publishing deal, it might be two years before your book even comes out? You want it all to happen NOW. Or else, why waste your time?

-Low chances of success

Some people worry that writing without guaranteed success is the biggest "waste of time." Be honest, what were you doing until now? Probably a lot of time-wasting stuff. You can keep doing that while you wait for success to magically happen. Or, if you really are a writer, you can be working on improving your skills, and on other writing projects, and on building your author's platform, and on supporting other writers because of your love of writing. In fact, you can be so busy being a writer that you won't even notice the time going by.

-Fear

Many writers cite fear of rejection. Writing and publishing are uniquely rejection-filled fields. You will realize that your worth as a writer is not tied to the opinions of a gatekeeper or two. You will understand that so many rejections happen because the great majority of people in the publishing industry are driven by how much they think they can make from your book, not how good your story is.

Before we even get to the stage where you would have the opportunity to get your first rejection by an agent or publisher, or your bad review by a reader or bookstagrammer (YAY! It's a rite of passage, y'all) you may be experiencing a much more insidious, pervasive form of fear. Its source is much closer: it comes from within. This fear stems from your own perfectionism, i.e., being afraid your work will never be good enough. Our brain has a crazy trick to avoid disappointment from not being good enough: it fools us into never even attempting the thing that might lead to failure. Let me tell you, that is not an option. Failing after having tried your BEST is way better than never trying because you were scared to fail. I know this because it's

happened to me. It's happened to all of us. Believe me when I say this: you need to push through it. Every time you do, it gets a little easier.

And stop beating yourself up about how bad your writing is. I'm not saying you shouldn't keep trying to be as good as you can be, or that you should ignore constructive criticism from those who are actually in the business of writing. The sooner you realize that you are not actually your own worst critic and that a practiced eye can vastly improve your manuscript, the better off you'll be.

By the way, according to a recent study conducted at King's College in London, there's a link between worrying a lot and verbal intelligence. People with a heightened tendency to generate negative thoughts are more likely to have a highly active imagination. So congrats, worrywart: you may actually be a better writer than you give yourself credit for.

Another form of fear is the fear of negative or doubting feedback from friends and family. According to them, they're trying to spare you from a life of poverty, rejection, and frustration by "helpfully" pointing out that your chances of being published are slim, or that they've never thought of you as a writer, so you must therefore not be one, etc. etc. However, these people are usually not your audience, and many times, they are projecting their own fears or frustrations onto you. Maybe they're secretly frustrated "aspiring writers" too, but they never got brave enough and committed enough to progress beyond that. Don't worry about them. Thank them for their "support" and move on.

-Lack of knowledge

You feel that your current education makes you somehow "less than." Some of the most powerful and artistic books written were produced by people with little formal education, and conversely, many best-sellers are widely considered to be badly written from an academic standpoint. Also, not all readers are Nobel laureates or in possession of genius level intelligence. Some of them just want to be entertained and inspired by a good story. Many are looking for something light and fun to read on the beach. Some look to reading as an escape from stress.

This doesn't mean you can throw all the rules of grammar and storytelling out the window. Being a writer means being a lifelong learner. We are all simply on a different spot on the sliding scale of education, talent, and ability. Everyone is capable of further educating themselves AND hiring or enlisting someone to help whip their

writing into shape. You don't need to pay \$30,000 for an MFA in creative writing, though some people do and are glad they did. You don't need to pay thousands for an editor before you're ready. There are many other ways of improving your writing skills, including some tools that will be provided on our Spalmorum website in the very near future, and free information that is already available all over the Internet, if you're willing to look for it and sift through it.

Almost always, determination and perseverance can more than make up for a possible deficiency in education or ability.

Your writing will find a reader, or a whole lot of readers, with whom your words and ideas and story resonate, and isn't that the point? Some would-be writers are tripped up by the fact that they "don't know how" to write and publish a book. But anyone can learn that.

Often, on online writing forums, I'll notice would-be authors stating that they hope to make lots of money from their writing, and then asking a basic question that proves that:

a) They haven't even started writing, and they're already worried about making money from it.

b) They haven't educated themselves as to the most basic requirements for writing and publishing. Things like how long a book should be, how cover selection works, how to publish conventionally or independently.

c) They haven't read any of the other threads on that forum because their question has already been answered a thousand times.

d) Their grammar sucks. Again, I want to point out that there is no shame in your grammar sucking. However, if your grammar sucks and you're lurking on writing boards insulting other writers and demanding that people read your work and stating that your book should be a bestseller, you need to face some realities.

It often baffles me that so many people who claim to want to be writers don't seem to know how to read or listen. If writing is important to you, you will stop wasting time asking stupid questions, and get smart about getting the answers and skills you need. If you actually read or listen to and act on all of the information about writing and a writing career available to you: grammar rules, necessary steps, advice from professionals, directions, and feedback from agents and publishers, etc. you will get further than you ever thought possible.

-Laziness

This is where the tough love comes in: tons of people have ideas. A tiny percentage of those people will do anything about it, whether it's in business, in writing, or in any other realm. I always crack up when someone is "afraid someone will steal their idea." If the "thief" is committed enough to fall in love with that idea so much that they stick with it and do the work that goes into writing and publishing a 300 page book based on it before you start or finish yours, you should be impressed by them, and disappointed in yourself.

I get it, though: it is SO much easier to dream of something and never actually do it. This way, you won't experience the more immediate failure and heartbreak and frustration. You'll only know that you failed at the very end of your life, when you realize that you didn't pursue your dream. Hmmm. That sounds pretty sad, actually. In my opinion, in the long run, postponing your dream is NOT the easier route. No one dies regretting that they never finished the second season of some TV show, or that they didn't spend enough time sitting on the couch. But they do die regretting that they didn't DO enough.

If writing a book isn't motivating enough to you, then by all means, toss this PDF into the trash, unsubscribe from my mailing list, and get upset at me for having called you names, and then get your ass off the couch and do something else: climb that mountain, train for that marathon, plan that trip, spend more quality time with a loved one...

Speaking of getting off your ass, here's our second magic tool:

ACTION

Action is the difference between wishing and doing, between success and failure. Let me tell you about two writers I met along the way.

We'll start with one person who found out the hard way that NOT ACTING leads to failure no matter how lucky and talented you are.

Susie (not her real name) is a vivacious and creative friend of mine. She lives in LA, which is, by the way, the writing town to end all writing towns. One night, Susie was lucky enough to bump into a well-regarded and well-connected producer at a party. She told him about a script she was “working on-” really, it was more of an idea at that stage, but her idea was really pretty cool and timely, and she described it in her trademark enthusiastic way, so it garnered interest from the producer. He was intrigued enough by the concept to consider making it into a TV pilot. He gave my friend a short timeframe in which to produce a full pitch package. This was to include a “more polished” version of the script (ha!), full character descriptions, and a synopsis. The producer told my friend he would present this package to other Hollywood executives he knew.

Did my friend even realize how lucky she was? Not only had she met and impressed a powerful person, but she had them on her side. If she just carried out her part of the deal, he was going to use his pull to get her idea in front of people who counted. She also had another huge advantage, which she didn't see as an advantage at the time: a specific timeframe, which gave her a built-in deadline.

I believe that a deadline is one of the most motivating things there is, but she didn't see it that way, and she panicked. For two weeks, I called my friend every day. As a professional writing coach, I wanted to help her by providing accountability (we'll talk about accountability in the next section). But Susie rejected my help. She said it was just stressing her out. In fact, the thought of potentially disappointing the producer stressed her out so much that she needed to distract herself with a million things that weren't writing. The last time I called her, a couple of days before the deadline, she was at the mall, buying shoes for her future red carpet appearances.

“Don't worry,” she said. “I have it all in my head. It won't take me long at all to get it done, I just need to relax first.”

“Girl, don't buy the shoes just yet,” I thought. If it was so easy to get the cool things that are in our heads onto paper, in usable form, in record time, we would all be bestselling authors!

Needless to say, my friend didn't get her pitch done. She burned her bridges with the producer by wasting his time and she's still talking about her “dream” of being a writer. She refuses to see that if it hadn't been for her inaction- ironically stemming

from fear of failure, there would at least be a CHANCE that she might be a successful writer right now, with a TV show or at the very least valuable experience and exposure under her belt.

Another person I met in LA, we'll call her Jane, doesn't have the natural charm that Susie possesses, and certainly isn't the type to go to industry parties. Unlike Susie, even though she tried to write a little every day, she wasn't that confident of her skills. She'd been trying to move her novel along, but not really getting anywhere because of self-doubt and lack of support.

When picking up bagels one morning, she came across a sign announcing a writers' meetup group. The format was low-pressure: meet in the bagel shop one evening a week, grab a snack or a glass of wine, work uninterrupted for an hour or two, and then discuss one's work, or even read it, to the other writers there. Or not. No pressure.

Now, *Susie* wouldn't have even considered joining a writing group that meets at a bagel shop. That's just not what "cool" writers do, is it? But for Jane, it was the sort of low pressure, social environment she realized she'd been missing.

Jane started attending the group and making it a priority. Just by coming to this writers' group, Jane had transitioned from aspiring writer, to real writer. The more she showed up, the more others seemed to consider her as a writer. The simple act of telling someone "I can't have dinner with you on Monday, I have writers' group," made her sound like a professional, one for whom writing is a priority.

Jane literally had tears in her eyes when she told me about the first time someone introduced her as a writer.

Soon, Jane was shopping her manuscript around to agents, several of which she was referred to by other writers in the group. She was offered a publishing deal. Not a fantasy publishing with a six-figure advance, but an opportunity to have her book published, and therefore discovered by an audience. It took a single action for Jane to transition from *aspiring* to *real* writer, especially in her mind. Which is what counts, because now, all of Jane's actions support the fact that she considers herself a real writer, and the effect only intensifies over time.

Now that you know the importance of action, what are some of the small actions you can take right now to further your career as a writer? Which simple actions can get you closer to finally fulfilling your dream of being an author? Whether you're

planning on self-publishing, or trying for conventional publishing, there are concrete steps that need to be taken. Familiarize yourself with them, and make a checklist out of them, and make a point of checking at least one thing off that checklist each day. That's one form of action.

-Practice

-Read

-Research

-Learn

These are the things that will inspire you and improve your writing.

-Schedule

Make time to write regularly. Schedule it into your calendar. Make it a key part of your schedule, as important as business meetings or self-care. Writing can be a component of self-care.

-Build an author website

-Grow your social media presence

-Attend author events

-Interact with others

Building your author platform is something you should start on long before your book is finished.

-Fail

That's right. Give yourself permission to fail and fail again. What if you do fall on your face? What's the worst that could happen? Failure can't hurt you any more than you allow. Your manuscript got rejected by an agent? Wow! You completed a manuscript and followed through with submitting it? What can you do to get you closer to succeeding next time? Make sure there is a next time.

- Define or redefine success

By success, I don't mean someone else's vision of success. I mean what success truly means to YOU. Focus on the small victories that take you closer to your final vision. Celebrate each one as it happens. Small steps add up.

Things NOT to do:

-Make excuses

Accept that you are the responsible for your own success- and your own failures. Luck has little to do with it, and no one is gonna be successful for you.

Too uneducated to write? You can learn. Too tired to write? Reprioritize your sleep and other activities. Too busy raising your kids to write? I'm pretty sure they nap sometimes, or that you can sit them at a table doing fun and relatively quiet crafts while you write. You can take them for a walk or push the stroller while you dictate your book into a dictation program (all kids love stories!)

-Too busy at work? Wait, are you too busy to eat? To exercise? To sleep? To watch Netflix? To hang out with loved ones? To shop? To groom yourself? If you're literally working 24/7, you're a robot and probably don't need to be reading this, plus with advances in AI you will soon be able to multitask enough to write a bestseller every day. Otherwise, you can carve out time to write.

"If [Voltaire](#) and [Marquis de Sade](#) could write in prison, then you can do it in suburbia, at lunch, at work, or after your kids go to sleep. You will always find excuses if you want them and you probably do."- Scott Berkun

-Quit

It won't happen all at once. You'll have setbacks. But not quitting will bring you closer to success than anything else possibly could. It takes an everyday effort, and lots of reminders.

Actions build up over time. As I said before, each day, do an ACTION that will move you forward. Extra points if you do something measurable, that will be seen by others. Why? Because of the third pillar of success: Accountability.

ACCOUNTABILITY

It's human nature: our odds of success for any venture increase if we join a group or a class, or report back to a coach, or announce our intention to do something in a public forum. We feel obligated, and supported, and we don't want to fail in front of others (though seriously, there's no shame in failing- just pick yourself up and try again). It's easier to be part of a team, or part of a group, or a committee, than trying to go it alone. Many people need to be policed by others to "keep them honest" when it comes to achieving their goals. Many writers, especially new writers, will lose momentum when left to their own devices. It can be hard to keep going, day after day, paragraph after paragraph, draft after draft, without support. That's why you must try to find a writing community.

Some of you will argue that you don't need a writing group: writing is different, it is naturally a solitary pursuit, and it's solitary for a reason. Yes, solitude can feed creativity. We writers love those quiet hours spent immersed in a story. But working in a vacuum 100% of the time is not the best option. If you lock yourself in a room day after day and work without pause...maybe having a writing buddy would give you some perspective. Maybe you're agonizing over small details that someone else could help with because they're seeing your work with fresh eyes. Maybe your work has been going in a direction that is not optimal, but you're too close to it to realize it until you've wasted a lot of time and energy on it. A tactful comment from a supportive reader would have set you straight.

Remember Jane, who joined a writing group, kicking off the events that led to her book deal? That's the power of accountability (of course Action and Attitude came into play too).

Having writer friends WILL keep you writing. Having writer enemies can keep you writing, too.

The definition of a writer is someone who writes. If you're getting distracted, or if your writing slows to a trickle, you're in danger of not being a writer anymore. You can truly be distracted away from your purpose without even realizing it. But if you had someone keeping you accountable, that wouldn't happen.

What if there are no other writers in your area? I live, for part of the year, in a very rural environment. The minute I started looking, I realized that there were quite

a few authors around, and several writing groups already in existence, as well as interest expressed to form yet another at the local art center. The more “boring” and “quiet” your town, the more people will jump at the chance to attend a writing group if you start one.

Super introvert? Horrifically busy? If meeting in person is absolutely out of the question, there are other options.

Don’t sabotage yourself by assuming that all writing support looks the same. For my friend Susie, the only writing group she would have been interested in a group of “cool” and “successful” novelists with a few published bestsellers under their belts, who meet in a trendy coffee shop with artisanal pour-overs.

But a real writing support/accountability system can be:

- 2 or 3 moms meeting in each other’s homes after school drop-off once a week for support and advice.

- A class at your local college or Y or public library that includes instruction and critique.

- A lunchtime meeting of accountability partners in your office. Some can be writing fiction. Others can be working on blog entries or marketing materials. You’re all writers.

- A small to medium sized group of busy people who commit to regular meetings, where a moderator keeps the discussion targeted and helpful.

- A regular Skype or phone session and document sharing with another writer whose work complements yours or speaks to you.

- A larger, more fluid group that people attend when they are able to, for writing and voluntary critique. One person “leads” and acts as organizer. This will work best for you if you try to attend as regularly as possible.

- 2 or 3 or 4 full time writers spending multiple hours of each day in a co-working space for creatives and discussing issues over lunch or coffee.

- A focused online forum with regular members who commit to positive critique and don’t allow trolling or bullying- you can easily start your own on Facebook or join an existing one.

And if you don’t have time to join a writing group or to do any of those activities, even once a month? If you examined all of the other things taking up your time and energy, and decided that all of them were more important than writing? Like Susie, whose ATTITUDE was more than a little skewed, who didn’t take ACTION as needed, and who found ACCOUNTABILITY more stressful than

helpful, you may find the glamorous dream of being a writer much more compelling than the unglamorous reality of hard work and uncertainty. And there's nothing wrong with that. It's not for everyone. You have permission to find another dream.

So that's it- that's the secret:

1)Attitude

2)Accountability

3)Action

Now get back out there and start writing, author.