

# The Writer's Toolbox

written by Holly

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Every profession has its tools and requirements, and writing is no different. Hardware and software are nice, but they won't make you a writer. These four tools, used regularly and with the best of what you have in you, will.

- **English**—If you cannot spell, if you don't know how to punctuate a sentence, if you aren't sure about grammar, if you don't recognize the appropriate place to break a paragraph or remember how to set off dialogue from narrative, then stop right here. You must know all of these things so well that you don't have to think about them when you write. Your editor will not correct your awful spelling or sloppy punctuation; she will only reject your manuscript. Learn to use the written language first.
- **Persistence**—I could also call this "thick skin." You'll need it, whatever you choose to call it. You must accept that some of your work will not be good enough to sell, that some editors won't like your work even if it's good enough to sell, that things you send out will come back rejected. You must strive to improve constantly. You must realize that everything you write you could have written better, if only you'd known how ... and then you must, on your next venture, figure out that 'how.' No writer, however good, is ever good enough.
- **Self-Confidence**—Conversely, you must believe that you have something to say, and that you alone are the best person in the world to say it. You must, on really lousy days, remember that you have a dream you are trying to make come true. You must have faith that what you want to do matters—that you are not just selling books (for

if your only dream is to sell things, then you can sell shoes or TVs much more easily, and save a few trees in the process), but that you are reaching out to people, and trying, through your stories, to give them something they didn't have before.

- **Goals**—You must set them now, and set them high. Along with “write three pages a day” and “send off first story before next month” and “get paid for something I write,” add “write a story that takes my own breath away” and “create a character so wonderful people write to you begging for more stories about him (or her)” and “include something so powerful in a novel that it changes someone's life for the better.” Set small goals for your sanity ... but large goals for your soul.

**NOTE:** I offer a comprehensive introductory class based on my fiction-writing and publishing experience. It's called How to Write Flash Fiction that Doesn't SUCK, and it is no-strings-attached FREE, including a private classroom, downloadable lessons, and a friendly, well-moderated forum where you can work with other students. I hope you'll try it out.

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