

## Tiny Course Empire Podcast Episode 24: How to Become a Better Writer

*PLEASE NOTE: This is a machine transcription. Some punctuation and spelling weirdness are to be expected.*

You're listening to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast with Cindy Bidar. This is episode number 24, and today we're talking about how to become a better writer. Yes, even if you think you stink and even if you hate it, and even if you dread doing it, stick around, I'll give you all my tips for getting better at writing.

Welcome to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, a weekly show dedicated to helping you launch and grow your digital course business, even if you don't have a big team or a six-figure ads budget, we'll help you design smart systems, take consistent action and achieve massive success on your own terms. Now, here's your host, Cindy Bidar.

Welcome back to the Tiny Course Empire Podcast. I am your host, Cindy Bidar, and you will find show notes and recommended resources for this episode at [TinyCourseEmpire.com/24](https://TinyCourseEmpire.com/24). If you're a new listener to the show or if you're an old friend, welcome, I am thrilled to have you here, please be sure to click the subscribe or the follow button so you never miss an episode. Because coming up next week, we're going to take a deep dive into Shiny Object Syndrome, what it is, how it hurts your business and what you can do to avoid it, but that's next week's show.

This week we're talking about writing and how you can be better at it, and maybe even learn to enjoy it, even if right now you're thinking, But Cindy, I really, really hate to write and I truly suck at it. I promise you. It doesn't have to be that way, and I'm going to tell you how to fix it. So let's go ahead and get started. I have a simple eight-step process that's going to turn you from a terrible writer, and let's be clear, I don't believe you're a terrible writer, but I have a simple eight-step process that's going to take you from believing that you're a terrible writer, to believing that you can create content easily and create good content too. So let's go.

Step one: simply write more. Now listen, I know what you're thinking. You hate to write. Why would you want to do it more often? But truthfully, the only way to get good at anything is to do it more often. That's as true for writing as it is for skateboarding or cooking or playing the piano, write more. Write every single day, if you can, and you will get better at it, just because you're getting more practice.

Now, what might be keeping you from writing more is that you're comparing yourself to others, so step two in the process is to just embrace writing a terrible first draft, remember that what you're reading from your favorite writers is not their first attempt, it's a polished piece that's been through several rounds of

editing. Your own first draft is very likely to be choppy and have unfinished sentences and awkward phrasing, and it just doesn't convey the message that you're trying to send, but that's okay. It's a first draft. I used to hear this advice and think, Yeah, but you don't really mean really bad first draft, you mean just a little bad, like not terrible. My own first drafts are all over the place, I might write the last paragraph and then skip back up and write the opening sentence and then fill in some of the middle bits before I land on a headline I think might work. So I fill that in, then I change the ending. I mean, you get the picture, it's a mess and it's not fit for anybody to read, it's more like word salad than what anybody would even call a draft first or otherwise. The point is to just get the ideas down on the page though, even if there are more random thoughts and half-finished sentences than actual writing, because the truth is, you can't edit something that doesn't exist, and that's going to be an important step in this process as well. So the first point, the first step in the process is just to get some words down on the page so that you have something to work with.

Step three, if you're stuck, start with an outline, an outline gives you structure, it gives you the milestones to reach for, and it helps keep whatever it is that you're writing from kind of wandering off into the weeds. That's a common problem that I have. I just start writing random things that don't make any sense in the context of what I am trying to create, so when outline helps to keep me on track, it helps to keep me going for the goal that I have originally started out writing for, so to write an outline, what I do is I just start by brainstorming, I think about what are the main topics that I want to include, I might create sections or headings for longer works, like blog posts or course lessons. I use bullet points just to get the main ideas onto the page, and then I can fill in the blanks. Once I have the bones of the piece in place, once I have that scaffolding built, then I can start to fill in all of the details. So that's step three. Start with an outline. It makes everything so much easier.

Step four is to learn to edit your own writing and to get really good at it, and honestly, this is the secret sauce to good writing, and one more point, you cannot edit, well, your writing, so this is a separate step. I like to use a three-pass editing technique and each pass uses a slightly finer polishing technique until the finished piece is really, really good. The first pass of this three-pass editing strategy that I use is structural. This is where I'm just reading through, I'm reading it really quickly, and I'm looking for things like, does it flow from one section to the next? Does it make sense? Are the steps in the right order? Are the transition smooth between sections? And you have to not be afraid to cut out big chunks of content here that just doesn't fit in sometimes, like I said, I wandered down those rabbit trails, and when I read back through it on this first orator in this first editing pass, I think that doesn't make any sense in here. This needs to go, maybe I'll use it someplace else,

maybe I'll put it at the end of the piece, maybe I'll start a whole other blog post or a whole other email with it, I don't know, but it doesn't belong in this particular piece. So that's what that first edit passes for is to kind of smooth out the really rough edges, and then I like to let it sit. I like to let it sit for at least a day. But if you can't let it sit for a day, let it sit a couple of hours for sure, because when you come back to it, if you're going to see other things that maybe don't make sense on that second pass and the second pass editing, I like to read it out loud. Reading your own writing out loud allows you to find missing words, it allows you to find awkward sentences, it will quickly identify sentences that are way too long. Here's a tip, if you run out of breath when you're reading out loud that sentence is too long. You might also find some structural errors that you missed on the first pass just by reading it out loud again, you can't do this, you won't find all of these errors if you're just reading silently, so go into your office, go into a quiet place, close the door and read it out loud, it really does make all the difference. That's the second pass of editing.

Then the third pass is to proof-read. Now, if you've never proofread your own writing before, it's harder than you think it's going to be. You will still miss things, you're going to miss things like misspelled words or misplaced apostrophes, and that's okay, we have some tools to help deal with that in just a minute. But that's the third editing pass, and that is to proofread, that's when you're looking at it with that kind of fine tooth comb looking for those tiny, tiny little mistakes that you didn't catch in the first and second pass, so that step four, to carefully edit your own writing never, ever, ever publish your first draft, and I think that's what a lot of us do, that's what I said at the beginning of this episode, that we are comparing our first drafts to somebody else's polished draft, you don't want to do that. You want to learn to edit your own writing and to edit it well. Now, if you are no good at editing, then another way to really quickly improve is to write for somebody who will critique you. I've told you many times about my early days as an online business owner, when I was writing for other people, one of the people that I wrote for was Karen text, and she has a copywriting agency, and I wrote a lot of content for her way back in the day. And Karen did something for me that just made me an incredibly, much better writer, maybe not an incredibly much better speaker, because I'm not sure that made sense, but she made me a much better writer simply by critiquing what I was sending her. She would send it back to me for revision and she would point out places where I could really tighten up my writing. Where I was using words repeatedly, where I was creating run-on sentences where my writing wasn't making sense, and by paying attention to those critiques and working those changes into future writing, it made me a much better writer. So if you can write for someone who is going to critique what you're writing now, typically, that's going to be somebody who's paying you for your words, but you could also work with a friend or a writing partner, or you could submit pieces for

publication to other blogs. A lot of times those editors will send them back for revision as well, and like I said, pay attention to what they say and make an effort to incorporate those changes into all of your writing going forward.

Step six is to pay attention to your grammar and spelling. We already touched on this in an earlier step about editing, but it's really important because grammar and spelling really do count, it's hard to look credible, it's hard to be credible if everything you write is filled with spelling or grammar errors, and listen, I am not perfect. Right now, in my email inbox is a long email from a subscriber who is helping me by pointing out some of my errors on a sales page, and I've also received emails from other people who tell me that my apostrophe use is wrong in a blog post or whatever, which is fine, I'm certainly not perfect. Like I said, it's really difficult to proofread your own writing, but there are some tools that you can use that will help you. One of my favorite tools is Grammarly, Grammarly is an app that you can download for free that will look at all of your writing and it will make suggestions for improvement, it will point out misspelled words, it will point out where you've used an apostrophe in the wrong place or where you have misused a semi-colon or where your grammar could use some attention. It's really good as a free tool, they also have a paid tier that will give you even more ideas for improvement, but I do want to caution you not to just blindly follow what any tool says it is not a human being reading your writing, so you have to take what it says with a grain of salt, not to say that it's not good advice, it just is not 100% perfect. Another tool to use is the Hemingway app. This is a free tool that you can copy and paste your writing into, and it will tell you where you are using run-on sentences or where you are using sentences that are too complex and difficult to read, so that's a really good tool for you to use if like me, you tend to write really long, really complicated sentences. And finally you can hire a proofreader if you prefer, and if your budget allows for that proofreaders are not as expensive as you might think, they're really quick and they will find things that you will not find so, if that is an option for you, I highly recommend hiring a proofreader for anything that you write, that you put out there in public.

Step number seven is to read more and read in lots of different genres and lots of different styles, read fiction, read non-fiction, read history, read biographies, read the newspaper, read different blogs. Read as much as you possibly can, that is one thing that will make you a much, much better writer, just the act of reading and not just reading good stuff. Don't just read Hemingway and Shakespeare and all of the great writers, read really bad writers because you will often learn more from reading really bad writing than you will from reading really good writing. You will see things and think, oh my gosh, I would never write a sentence that way, or I would never say that that way. And you can really learn from other people's mistakes by reading really bad writers.

And finally, step number eight, and this is the single most important step, stop telling yourself that you're a bad writer or that you hate to write. When you do that, when you tell yourself that you're fighting against your own brain and writing is going to be a miserable experience for you, so don't tell yourself that you are bad at it or that you hate it. You don't have to tell yourself you love it, that's hard to believe. If you really don't feel like you love to write, but don't tell yourself that you hated either, maybe just say, This is something that I'm doing to grow my business, and I'm willing to do it, and I'm willing to not be as comfortable with it as I could be with something else. So don't tell yourself that you hate to write or that you're a bad writer, and don't let that voice in your head get in there and convince you otherwise, because that's just going to make for a miserable experience, and it's going to make for writing that is not as engaging as it potentially could be.

So, that's it. Eight Ways to become a better writer. Write more every day, if you can. Write a bad first draft, nobody's going to see it, but you honestly, it can just be word salad on the page, that's what my first drafts look like, you have my permission to do the same. Start with an outline, if that makes it easier, then you can just fill in the blanks rather than stare at a blank screen, wondering where to start. Step number four is to edit what you write, this alone is going to improve your writing dramatically. Remember that three pass, the first pass edit is for structure, the second pass edit is to fine-tune and look for awkward sentences, and the third pass edit is for proofing and just final clean-up. Step five is to write for somebody who will critique you, rather, that is somebody who's paying you to write for them, or somebody who is a friend or a writing partner. Step six is to use tools like Grammarly or Hemingway app to find or fixed mistakes or higher approved reader, if that is in your budget, and if you prefer. Step Seven is to read and read a lot, read everything you can get your hands on, read books, read articles, read magazines or whatever, read the back of the cereal box. Remember that back in the day, I used to do that when I was a kid, read the back of the cereal box at the breakfast table. And step 8 is to stop telling yourself that you are bad at it, it becomes a self-filling prophecy.

Now, if you want to dig more into this topic, and I highly recommend you do, because as an online business owner, we have to create content, that's what we do, so if you would like to dig more into this and become an even better writer, I do have some resources to recommend. I have four books that I highly recommend, and I'm going to put links on the show notes page to all of these, but the four books are *On Writing* by Stephen King, *Everybody Writes* by Ann Handley, *Bird by Bird*, by Anne Lamont, and *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron. These four books by them, borrow them from your library, whatever you need to do, but read them, study them. They will make you a better writer.

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So head on over to the show notes at [TinyCourseEmpire.com/24](https://TinyCourseEmpire.com/24) for the links to those and all of the other resources I mentioned, and while you're there, be sure to leave me a comment, I would really love to know what tips you have for becoming a better content creator, and if you consider yourself pretty good at writing, or if you're somebody who says, I just think at this.

Finally, if you're enjoying the show, would you do me a favor and leave a rating and review over at Apple Podcasts or wherever you're listening, that helps other people find us, and of course, if you have a friend or a colleague who would love to hear this episode, go ahead and send them the link, the direct link to this episode is [TinyCourseEmpire.com/24](https://TinyCourseEmpire.com/24). Have a terrific day, everyone, and I will talk to you all again next week.

If you like what you hear on the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, you're going to love all of the courses you'll find inside my Six-Figure Systems Membership, that's my monthly membership where we dig into online marketing for regular people like you and me, we don't do big launches or have the big headaches and the big expenses that come with them, instead we focus on creating repeatable, sustainable systems that continue to grow over time, and they don't suck up all of our energy or require a 10-person team to manage, you can come see what we're all about at [SixFigureSystems.com](https://SixFigureSystems.com), and I'll see you on the inside.