

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

When I was a kid, I used to dream of being a writer for a while i wanted to write horror novels like Stephen King. Then I wanted to write high fantasy. Think Lord of the Rings or Game of Thrones. After that, I was sure that police procedurals were my thing. My current obsession is trashy romance novels. I know. Don't judge me. I'll read anything. And I wouldn't mind publishing a few either.

But along the way, as I was telling myself I wanted to be a writer, I discovered that I actually was i may not be publishing novels, but I am absolutely, without a doubt writing for a living. And so are you. If you create content to attract an audience, to grow your email, list to educate your community, then you are a writer. Or I guess to put it in the language of the Internet, we are content creators. I added up all of my content for a webinar intro last week and it comes out to around 3 million words. That's a lot of writing, and it doesn't even include all of the content I wrote for my clients over the 10 years that I spent as a virtual assistant.

Here's what I know about content creation. It is the number one way for you to grow your audience. Putting your ideas, your thoughts, your systems out there into the world is what will grow your business. That's why content creation is the very first step in the online business road map. It's the most important thing you can be doing as a business owner. Content is what gets you noticed. It's what drives traffic. It makes sales, it turns casual visitors into fans.

And none of that can happen if you don't write. And I know a lot of you find content creation to be a bit of a struggle. Last week, my friend Tish was kind of flabbergasted when I casually mentioned that I had written 10 emails that morning before jumping on a webinar. She confessed that it takes her forever, and that's her word, forever, to write a single email. This is episode 108 of the Tiny Course Empire Podcast, and today I'm going to share 17 things that I've learned as I published those 3000000 words.

My hope is that these 17 things will help you to not only create better content, but that they'll make it easier and faster for you as well.

Hey, it's Cindy and thanks for spending a few minutes of your day with me. You'll find the show notes and the recommended resources for this episode

<https://tinycourseempire.com/108>. While you're there, be sure to download the online business road map that I mentioned. This step by step plan will show you exactly what to focus on during this phase of your business, whether you're just starting out or you're ready to scale. If you haven't already done so, hit the subscribe button while you're there.

New episodes appear like magic every Thursday right in your podcast app of choice. Next week I'm answering a listener question that came up after a recent episode about creating productive workflows. He told me that he struggles to find team members who can follow his procedures, and even though he's invested hundreds of hours into creating good systems, his staff still can't make good use of them. I have some ideas that I think he and maybe you, will find helpful, but that's next week. This week is all about making content creation easier so let's dig into the 17 tips that I have learned from publishing 3 million words over the past five years.

And these are in no particular order, so don't assume that any one thing is any more important than any other thing. Ok, here we go. Number one, never sit down to a blank page. Always know what your topic is before you sit down to write. Idea management and content creation are two very different tasks, and when you have an idea garden, that's what I call it, is an idea garden when you have that idea garden to draw from, it makes creating content so much easier. So what is an idea garden? In its simplest form, it is just a list of topics and notes that you might want to talk about at some point in the future.

Or it may be a quote that you found in a book that really spoke to you. Or maybe it's a passage from an article that you read that perfectly explains something and you want to share that with your audience. Adding these things to an app like Evernote or Bear or Google Keep or Google Docs. Keeping these little tidbits of information, these ideas, these thoughts that you have. Make sure that you never have to sit down and stare at a blank page and wonder, what the heck am I going to even talk about today? What am I going to create a podcast about what am I going to email my list what am I going to write a blog post about? What am I going to do my Facebook Live about this week people are waiting for me i have a schedule to keep and I don't know what I'm going to talk about.

That's the problem with a blank page. But when you keep an ideas list, when you grow an idea garden, you will never again sit down to that blank page number two never edit as you're writing and I'm going to admit this one is really hard for me i

have heard this piece of advice for years and years and years and it's just really hard for me to follow. I want to craft perfect sentences and perfect paragraphs as I'm writing, and it's just not efficient it's not effective.

Editing and writing are two very different things, just like idea management and writing are two very different things. The writing process is more like just a big brain dump of thoughts and half finished sentences and paragraphs that are in the wrong place and, you know, bullet points that maybe you'll keep and maybe you won't. That's what writing is writing is messy. There's a famous quote from I believe it was Ernest Hemingway who said that all first drafts are crap. He used a different word, but this is a family friendly podcast, so all first drafts are crap and that is exactly what he was talking about.

Your first draft of anything is going to be messy it is not meant to be published. It's the editing process that cleans things up, that makes things pretty that creates content that people want to read or that people want to consume. And if you are picking up a book, or you are watching a YouTube video, or you're listening to this podcast and you are thinking that these things are the first draft, you are mistaken.

These things go through lots and lots of editing before they are ready to publish so when you sit down to write something, if you are feeling intimidated that what is pouring out onto the page is not publishable, That's exactly how it's supposed to be. Editing comes later. Do that as a separate step number three. Never try to create the finished product as you are writing it. And what I mean by that is specifically for course creators or YouTube creators maybe, or people who have membership sites.

A lot of times what I see is people are writing and this is me too, I used to do this, so I'm not, I'm not throwing shade on anybody this is, I learned it by experience. But what I see is people trying to create a course and maybe they've got 7, seven lessons that they want to write so they write part of the first lesson, and then they fire up their slide deck creator and they start creating slides so they've got content created and they've got slides in process and then maybe they record a part of that lesson and they so they've got a video to edit and meanwhile the lesson isn't even finished, they haven't even finished writing it.

And that is just chaos and it will never lead to anything that is as good as it could potentially be. So always do the writing first. Always create the content first. Then go and create your slide decks, or create your workbooks, or record your videos, or

record your podcast. Whatever that process is, whatever it is that you are creating, do the writing first and make it as complete as you possibly can before you try to fit it into different formats.

Number four create something every day. Writing is a habit as much as anything else, and the more you do it, the more the more easier the more you do it, the easier it becomes, and the more the words will flow. If you wait to be inspired or to feel inspired before you sit down at your keyboard, then writing is going to be harder for you than it needs to be. If you sit down and create something every day, even if it's just 100 words on that article that you've been thinking about, or you know, maybe it's a short email that you're not even ever going to send. These things help prime the pump they help get your brain in gear they help create that habit of writing.

So make it a point to sit down and create something every day. Maybe block off some time on your calendar, maybe a half an hour every morning before you do anything else. Even if it's just journaling and I shouldn't say just journaling, Journaling is an important part of the writing habit. But even if it's a journaling habit that you create where you just sit down and record your thoughts every day, that's going to help you get in the habit of writing.

And as you create that habit, writing becomes easier and easier to do number five never publish your first draft. I know a lot of people do this i am absolutely guilty of it again, I'm not throwing shade on anybody, but your second draft or your finished draft will always be better and you can test this for yourself. Here's here's how you can do it. Write an email or write A blog post, or write a podcast episode or whatever it is that you are creating and force yourself to not hit publish right away force yourself to say, you know what, I'm going to sit on this one for two days and then go back and look at it again and I absolutely guarantee that you will find ways to make that content better.

You will find ways to improve it you will find more creative words to use. You will find better ways to say something you will find more examples to share. If you let it sit and marinate for just a day or two, the longer the better i am not going to lie if you can let it sit for two weeks or 30 days, it's going to be even better because you'll go back to it with really fresh eyes you will forget a lot of the phrases and words that you used, and you will look at it like you're just coming to it new, like you're reading

it for the first time.

But if you can just let it sit for a couple of days, you're going to find ways to improve it i guarantee it. Number six, write like you talk, not like how your high school English teacher taught you to write. We all learned how to write in the same way at least, I guess I can't say all of us, because they do have an international audience. But we all, in this country in the United States, learn to write in the same way, right we have essays that are broken up by paragraphs, and the paragraphs have a topic sentence that tell us what the paragraph is about and then there's three or four sentences that explain the topic sentence, or that confirm the topic sentence, and then there's a conclusion sentence, and then we go on to the next paragraph, And that is the most boring thing to read.

It's fine if you're writing APHD thesis, I suppose, but if you are writing content that is meant to engage or educate or build a community, it's not going to fly right like you talk not how you learned how to write number seven. The more you create, the more ideas you will have. We touched on this in number four, but I want to tell a story about a customer who came to me one time.

He has a very narrow niche, very small niche, and he was concerned that if he embraced the Tiny Course Empire business model that he was going to run out of things to talk about, that he was going to run out of things to create courses around that he was going to basically run out of things to say. I don't think that's possible. I think the more you create, the more ideas you will have. In fact, I don't just think that I know that for a fact.

The more writing I do, the more ideas I have about things that I want to write about things that I want to say to you about courses that I want to create for you about emails that I want to send to you there's just an endless supply of ideas, and the more you create, the more ideas will appear to you number eight. If you don't know what to write, just start writing. Eventually your brain will engage and meaningful words will start to flow.

In her book *The Artist Way*, Julia Cameron recommends doing an exercise that she calls Morning Pages every day, which is where you just get up and write longhand, 3 pages of whatever comes to mind. And she says that for a lot of people, this is really hard, and they'll stop writing and they'll start overthinking it and she says that when that happens to you, when you find yourself running out of things to write,

just write. I don't know what to write.

I don't know what to write. I don't know what to write over and over and over again until your brain kicks in. You can do the same thing when you're creating content for your audience, when you're writing A blog post, when you are recording a podcast episode, when you're recording a YouTube video. Remember, editing is another step so it's OK to just say I don't know what to talk about right here and just go off on a complete tangent you can always cut it out later, but if you don't engage that writing muscle, then it's much easier to just sit frozen and stare at the screen and think to yourself, I don't know what to say and the pressure builds and you put all of this energy into thinking of just the perfect thing to say next, when in reality there probably is no perfect thing to say next and if you just start writing, then the thoughts are going to come to you.

So don't be afraid to just start typing it will help your brain to engage number nine delete the first paragraph or two. This is an idea I learned from fiction writers. Sometimes when we're priming the pump, when we're just start when we just start typing, right, the first couple of paragraphs that come out are just they're just garbage they're not good they're back story they're exposition that doesn't need to be there, doesn't serve the greater good it doesn't add anything to the piece that you're writing, and they can be deleted without taking anything away. So if you're looking at a piece of writing, if you're editing a piece of writing, if you're editing A blog post, you're editing a podcast episode, you're editing an email.

Take a hard look at that first paragraph or two and ask yourself, does this really need to be here? If I remove it, will the piece lose anything and chances are good it will not. So delete the first paragraph or two. Number 10. If you really want your reader to focus, embrace what is called in Medeus Rests, and I'm sure I am pronouncing that incorrectly it is Latin, and it means in the midst of things. It's what creates a really good hook to keep your reader or your listener engaged. You will find this again in fiction writing, but you will also find it in really good storytelling, even in the online world even in the nonfiction world, dropping your reader or your listener into the middle of the story is a really good way to get them to read what's next so if you really want your reader to focus, start in the middle.

Drop them into the midst of things number eleven. Consume unusual to you content. If you normally read only business books, read fiction. If you normally only read fiction, pick up a memoir. If you normally only watch YouTube videos, listen to

a podcast. Whatever is different to you, Whatever is not in your routine is a good way to spark some creative energy so consume unusual content number twelve. Spend a lot of time just thinking.

Spend a lot of time in silence, not consuming content not with the television on in the background not with a podcast in your ears. Not with YouTube playing while you're making dinner. Just spend time thinking, I was thinking just this morning, that shower thoughts you've probably heard this phrase shower thoughts where people get really good ideas when they're in the shower. Those things happen because the shower is probably the only place that you are just thinking you don't have any other input. All you're doing is standing there in silence and washing your hair. There's nothing else for your brain to do but think, to solve problems, to come up with creative ideas. So that's when you get your most creative thoughts is in the shower.

Cal Newport has another word for this. Not necessarily shower thoughts, but he talks about doing what's called productive meditation, where you sit in silence or you go for a walk in silence or you know, you jump on the treadmill and you do it with no other input and you use that time and that space to let your brain come up with ideas. So spend a lot of time just thinking.

Don't spend as much time consuming. Spend time with your own thoughts and I'm gonna tell you that's gonna be uncomfortable at first it was not easy for me to really embrace this idea of sitting in silence but I gotta tell you now, I really like it so spend some time just thinking Thoughts number thirteen. When you're writing, use short sentences and paragraphs, especially if you're writing for the Internet now, this is obviously not going to matter if you're creating podcast episodes or if you're creating a slide deck or recording a YouTube video, Nobody can see your sentences nobody can nobody has to read your paragraphs but if you are writing content that is intended to be read, then use short sentences and paragraphs.

Right now, I am reading a book that has one multiple awards it's been named the best book of the year by New York Times it's been named the best book of the year by NPR. It was one of Barack Obama's favorite reads in a list that he published. And I'm reading it for book club and everybody seems to love it. And I am really struggling to get through it because the paragraphs go on for pages. And this is a book that has twenty three thousand five star reviews on amazon so clearly it's just me maybe it's because I am so used to reading on the Internet that, you know, I'm

used to short paragraphs and short sentences and I want to be able to scan things.

I can't do it in this book and it's driving me crazy and it's and it's making it so I don't even want to read it and this is not the only book that I have come across that does this. I was recently reading another book that comes highly recommended it's a little bit older, it's a very, you know, it's a it's a much favorited book in the productivity space, in the in the online business space. And I'm finding the paragraphs to be so long and so dense that I finally just gave up on it i finally just said you know what, life is too short to work this hard.

So use short sentences and paragraphs do your readers a favor. Make it easy for them to consume your content. If your paragraphs go on for full pages, they're too long. Go for shorter. But number fourteen don't be repetitive about it either. I used to work with a client who wrote emails he was an email marketer and he read somewhere that. Short sentences were better for email and I just told you short sentences, short paragraphs, much better for reading online, which is great but if every sentence is short, if every sentence is 6 words, if every sentence is a single paragraph, it gets really repetitive to read really fast so you have to break things up you have to vary things.

Short sentences sprinkle in some longer sentences. Short paragraphs sprinkle in a couple longer paragraphs just to break up the flow of the words on the page it will make it much easier to read and also a lot more fun to write. Watch for repetitiveness in your words and phrases and sentence structure too. One of the best things I ever learned as a content creator for other people when I was writing content for other people was when my client would send me back an article that I had written and tell me you've used this same word three times in the first paragraph. That was absolute gold. Watch for that in your own writing if you are repeating the same words over and over and over again, it's repetitive for your readers it's repetitive for your listeners, and it's going to make your content less impactful.

So watch for that repetitiveness don't be repetitive in your word choice, in your sentence structure, in your phrases, in your paragraphs number fifteen Read more In his book *On Writing*, Stephen King says if you don't have the time to read, you don't have the time or the tools to write. I completely agree with that. Put down your phone and pick up a book. It will make you a better creator and a more successful business owner as well number sixteen Always proofread your content,



and not because a typo is going to make you look bad, but because it throws your reader out of the narrative.

I've read some things from some that some other email marketers have said or some other bloggers have written about where they say that we as the reader should just ignore their typos because they're just being authentic or because they are dyslexic and this is just how they write and that this is just them and we should embrace them as the creative content creator that they are and that's all well and good i'm fine with that you get to create the content that you want to create. But you should know that when your reader comes to you and there is a typo or a missing word in a piece of content that you have created, it drops them out of the content it drops them out of the story that you were trying to tell.

It causes them to stop and reread and kind of really have to think about what it is you are writing it's not creating the engagement that you could be creating if you had taken the time to proofread it and i'm going to give you an example. I was reading an article the other day by a writer that I really like, and he always creates really useful content i learn a lot from him and in the first paragraph of this article that I was really excited to read, there was a missing word and i knew what he meant i knew what he was saying my brain could easily fill in that word.

But because the word was missing, I had to go back and read that line two or three times to try to figure it out was he was it really missing something or was the sentence just constructed in a way that was a little odd to me that i just had i had to read it multiple times and it took me out of the moment it took me out of the article. It did not create that engagement that I want to create with my writing.

So always proofread your content and I'm not saying that you have to be perfect with it i'm not saying that you are never going to have a typo. I know for a fact that when I publish the show notes for this episode, there's probably going to be a typo in it and some of you are going to email me to tell me about it because of this. Number 16, always proofread your content. I'm not saying you're going to be perfect, I'm not perfect, right? But take the time to at least proofread it, because the better the content you put out, the more engaged your audience will be so always proofread your content please, number seventeen rituals make everything easier.

I just came up with this one today i didn't come up with it. It's not like I invented the idea of rituals i mean, come on. But I just thought of this morning when I sat down

to write, and I realized that every morning I sit down at my desk and writing is the very first thing I do you guys know this. I've talked about this before that I am most creative first thing in the morning so this is when I do my content creation this is when I sit down to write i do other things in the afternoon when I don't have to feel so creative, when my brain doesn't have to be, you know, so engaged.

So I sat down this morning to write, and I kind of instinctively went through and I closed all of the apps that I'm not using so I don't have, you know, 167 things open on my computer so email is not pinging at me and social media is not calling to me. None of that is happening because I close all of the apps except my writing app.

I turn on some music that I particularly like that helps me focus it's Native American flute music, and I turn that on i turn it on really low so I can just barely hear it kind of helps me focus, get my coffee, and I've got that sitting on my desk, and I've got my favorite keyboard and I've got my notes and I know exactly what I'm going to write about. And it occurred to me that this is a ritual that I do every day when I sit down to write, It's the same way.

And this process, this ritual, is what tells my brain that it's time to write. I'm ready. I'm primed. I'm ready to go. So figure out what rituals you can incorporate into your writing practice to make writing as easy as possible, to make getting into the flow of content creation easier.

So that's it. Those are my 17 tips to make content creation easier and to make the content that you create better. What would you add to the list? I'd love for you to come over to <https://tinycourseempire.com/108> and leave me a comment.

What are your tips for easier workflows and better writing? And could you do me a favor? If you're enjoying the show, would you pop over to Apple Podcasts or wherever it is you listen and leave me a rating and review that helps the algorithms know that you value this content so they'll show it to more people and that is the best way to help us grow?

That's it for me this week i will be back next week with a deep dive into creating checklists and templates to make all of the processes in your business faster and easier.

Tiny Course Empire Podcast Episode 108: 17 tips for easier content creation

Because when you do that, have more time for creating more content.

Have a terrific rest of your day and I will talk to you again next week.