

How to write a novel...

Check your impulse

Author's earnings per year =  
£5k average

Source: Society of Authors

So why are you here – why isn't  
your novel already written?

# Getting started

‘That afternoon there was rain,  
just as she’d said there would  
be...’

Why do we abandon our  
beginnings?

The haves and the have *nots*

“The novel went through many drafts and there were large sections I cut completely. I find the initial writing (as opposed to the subsequent rewriting) hard and the results often feel lumpen.

A novel is such a mess for a long time and that’s what you have to be prepared to deal with – to face this mess every day.”

“How I write” Emily Perkins

Time Out Interview



1% inspiration 99% perspiration

Some key components of a  
successful first draft

‘Strong’ characters and good  
characterisation

Finding the plot

‘Immensely diverting ... a pacy  
read, constructed with a crisp  
control of tension and narrative  
drive’

Observer

Structure

*Writing what you know vs  
research*

- either way, proceed with  
caution

Whose story is it anyway?

*Narrative point of view*



Showing vs telling  
“dramatise, dramatise,  
dramatise”  
Henry James

Effective dialogue, description,  
setting...

Knowing your reader...and by  
extension your market

Constructive feedback

A craft like any other

# Further reading

- How novels work by John Mullan
- Creative Writing: a workbook with readings (ed. Linda Anderson,)
- The Creative Writing Coursebook: Forty Authors Share Advice and Exercises for Fiction and Poetry by Julia Bell, Andrew Motion
- A Creative Writing Handbook: developing dramatic technique, individual style and voice
- From pitch to publication by Carole Blake