Twitter Thread by Sam Rocha



Sam Rocha
@SamRochadotcom



THREAD

I get asked for writing tips a lot. Of all the ones I've given, here are a few of the ones that seem to hold true and remain somewhat universal or at least mostly unobjectionable:

#amwriting #writingtips

1. If you are a fast writer (i.e., if you compose first drafts very quickly) then you absolutely must become a slow editor. Much of what I call "writing" is really, for me, editing.

2. If you don't read you cannot write a lot or well. Sure, maybe you can read like a maniac for a decade and then read less after that, but without some large volume of intake, there will never be a meaningful output.

2.1 I sometimes say that I feel like writing without reading is like trying to run a marathan on a cracker. And sadly I see many students struggling to write when they have simply never read enough to fuel that demand of the task at hand.

3. All writing is writing if one decides to treat it that way. If one takes some degree of intentional will when sending emails, posting on social media and writing notes and marginalia, then all of that can count as meaningful daily writing.

3.1 "Write everyday" is a wonderful rule and easy if one simply treats all writing as writing. There are literary genres for most of this, too (e.g. correspondence, aphorisms, sentences, and more).

4. The greatest treasure for writers in the English language, putting aside Strunk and White and Fowler, is the interview archive at @parisreview. Reading writers talk about how they write is such a unique and direct way to think about writing.

4.1 I also love Stephen King's book On Writing and Mary Karr's book on Memoir (which she says in the intro is really just about writing).

5. This point is ironic, but also quite serious. Beware writer's tips. For instance, sure, place really matters when writing but not always. Inspiration is important, sometimes, but it is also sometimes an impediment. "Writer's block" is a phenomenon that is real and not real.

5.1 Any "method" for writing that becomes more than a routine and way of living, any rule that is more about principle than practice, any exercise that becomes an excuse or shortcut, any of these things are are dangerous as the writer's greatest enemy: the cliche.

6. Writing is NOT NOT NOT a solitary affair. The value of editorial support and a publishing outlet that is skilled in typesetting and other details totally and absolutely matters. One of the greatest harms for students is that so much of their writing is done alone.

7. Writing is an iterative process. Multiple drafts and editions and translations and so on all add and never subtract. This makes writing itself rather impossible but also gives one enough of a hopeless situation to venture into without too many false ambitions.

8. Structure matters. Especially sentence structure. The more I write the more grammar and syntax and usage interest me. The writer doesn't leave the dictionary, thesaurus, and style and usage books behind; it is the opposite.

9. Language is a "thought fossil." When we mark down our words, we leave traces of our consciousness, even our soul. This psychology of writing makes is a precious window into something that is otherwise hard to look into: the mind and, even deeper, the heart.

10. We are awash in writing. Just about everything we encounter in daily life has some writing attached to it somehow. All media is written. Television and cinema are recited from written scripts. I oppose the idea that writing is a specialized and rare thing; it is everywhere.

11. All speech is a form of writing, it is prose and poetry. Writing and speaking are tough to distinguish from each other in many ways and there seems to be a reason why the "writer" is so often thoughtful, well spoken, and the intellectual in society.

12. The best editorial key on your keyboard is the delete button.

FINIS