

Three Writing Tips From Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author Jennifer Egan



Patrick Allan

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Writing is something everyone should do on some level. No matter what makes you put pen to paper, these three tips from Jennifer Egan will help as you continue your own writer's journey.

In the book *Why We Write*, [Jennifer Egan](#), author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *A Visit From the Goon Squad*, shares some advice for all aspiring writers:

1. Read at the level at which you want to write. Reading is the nourishment that feeds the kind of writing you want to do. If what you really love to read is y, it

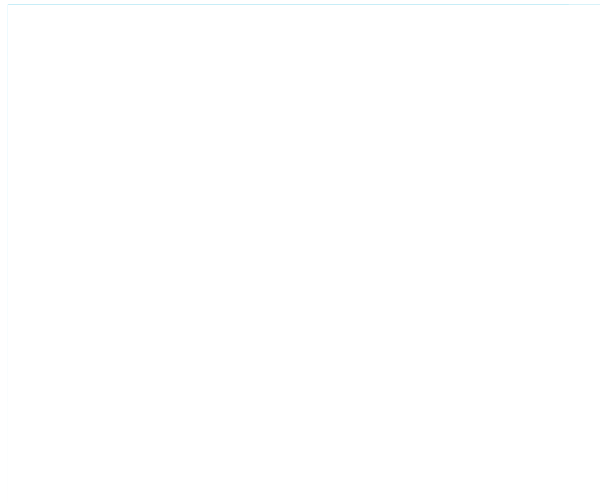
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2. Exercising is a good analogy for writing. If you're not used to exercising you want to avoid it forever. If you're used to it, it feels uncomfortable and strange not to. No matter where you are in your writing career, the same is true for writing. Even fifteen minutes a day will keep you in the habit.
3. You can only write regularly if you're willing to write badly. You can't write regularly and well. One should accept bad writing as a way of priming the pump, a warm-up exercise that allows you to write well.

Egan's advice, while simple, is clear and straightforward. Immerse yourself in the work you want to do yourself and learn from it, make it so going a day without doing any writing feels strange, and let yourself be a bad writer. Like with most skills worth pursuing, you have to be a bad before you can be good.

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Of the three statements quoted, I think this is the most important. It applies to any pursuit.

You have to accept that there is value in your garbage output.

In college, I had an design instructor who was a successful painter. Whenever I'd get frustrated with an assignment (and I did, frequently), he'd always tell

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“Everyone has 10,000 bad paintings in them. The sooner you start, the sooner they'll be done.” - That is an excellent quote!

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