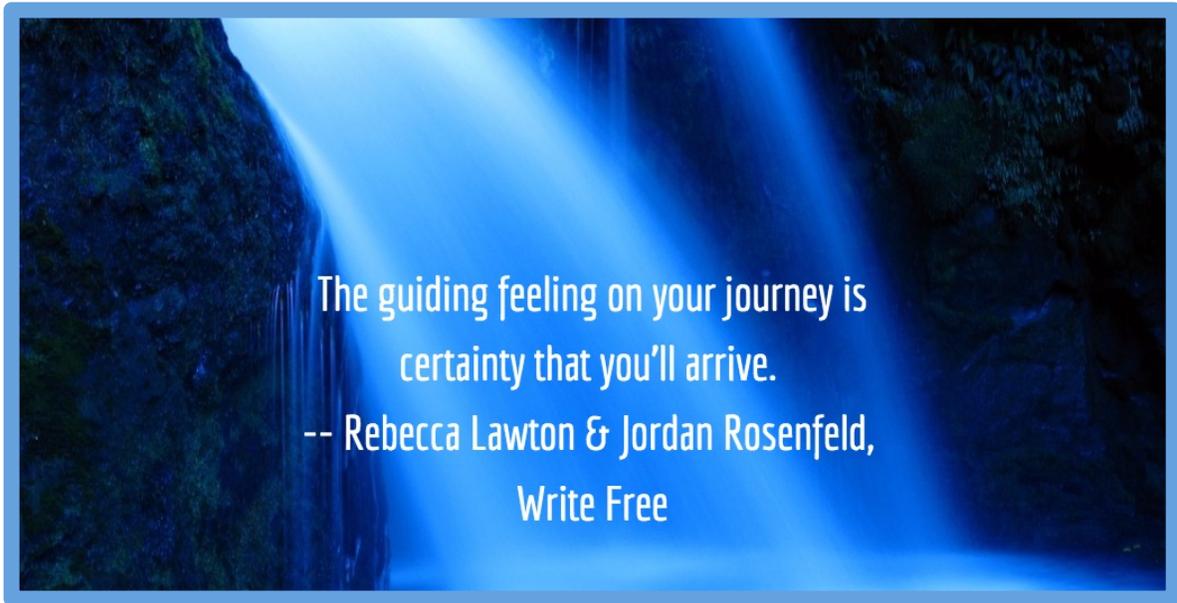


DAY ONE



The guiding feeling on your journey is
certainty that you'll arrive.

-- Rebecca Lawton & Jordan Rosenfeld,
Write Free

Dear Writer,

Don't know much about certainty. Don't know much biology. Don't know much about science book.

Do know a lot about the road I took—to get to the writing life.

Speaking from my own experience and experiences shared with me by friends, I've learned that the path to being an artist or writer is different for each of us, full of unique twists and turns.

When the intended journey is to create, there's one thing for certain: we must make time for it.

The first few Cool Writing Tips are about making space in your life for your writing/art/music and getting down to it—whether at a desk, in a cozy chair, at a table in the local coffee house, or with a pad of paper in your bed.

Some of my writer friends tell me that they write daily, just to have the pleasure of staying in touch with their characters, or their ongoing research, or the settings in which their stories occur. Others say that they have to wait to pick up a pen until they're moved by an inspired thought. I say, "Whatever works."

For my own writing, though, I tend to identify with Jack London, who said, "You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club."

The club in my case is the act of sitting down, opening a file, and tricking myself into working. I tell myself, “I’ll look at my manuscript for ten minutes. I won’t even work on it.” Next thing I know, I’ve been submerged in my writing for an hour and don’t want to stop.

If you’re best motivated by the spark of an idea that says, “Go write now!” then listen to it. To suppress that spark is to turn away from life.

One of my friends has the goal of writing 1,000 words a day. She starts before breakfast and aims to write those words in two hours. When she’s done, she enjoys a meal with her family—only then does she give energy to the other roles she gets to play in her life. Because she plays many, as most of us do.

Another friend commits to writing 500 words a day. His work is powerful, terse, and completely honest. Of all the writers whose style has been compared favorably with Hemingway, my friend really does share Papa’s succinct, elegant style. He assures me that 500 words a day add up. It must be true, because he’s written and published at least one fabulous book of short stories.

Day One’s Tip should be taken as gospel, even if it’s the only Tip you follow. On a regular basis, give yourself permission to sit and write/sketch/practice for at least ten minutes. Write a letter, draw a plan for a landscape, outline a scene from your novel, or jot down the first line of a poem. In the doing you’ll sample a taste of the creative life.

As Elizabeth Gilbert says in *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear* (Riverhead, 2015), “A creative life is an amplified life. It’s a bigger life, a happier life, an expanded life, and a hell of a lot more interesting life.”

As you’re creating, if you feel that the ten minutes are enough, you can stop for the day. Your work won’t be in vain. Something positive will come of it. Of that you can be sure, just as the true, guiding feeling on your journey is the certainty that you’ll arrive.

Becca