

# Is Writing *Really* That Hard?

**Paolo Fuentes**

People have been telling stories ever since we learned to communicate. Stories have been an important part of who we are as a society, and they have really helped us to understand certain things from other points of view. We can understand the events that have happened in history by reading the stories that people have told before us. We are able to read about important times in humanity, and that has lead to people being able to use what has happened in the past in many different ways. People have used these past events as evidence to fight for what they think is right. People can take stories from those who have been mistreated to gain rights, or even to use stories to create communities and religions. These stories can have many different purposes, and can come in many different forms. Storytelling can be seen in the form of writing. People can write books and articles in order to tell a story, or for the sake of entertainment. Writing takes effort and skill, and through experience, anyone can become a better writer.

Mukul Deva is a fifty-seven year-old Indian writer. He dropped out of school when he was sixteen, and joined Sikh Light Infantry in 1981, where he served his country for fifteen years. Mukul Deva has wrote sixteen books, all of which have been very successful and many of which have been made into movies. In the beginning of his writing career, he struggled to write the first few of his books, but learned to overcome this struggle because advice that his editor gave him. Recently, Mukul Deva visited the United World College of South East Asia along with lots of other speakers to speak to hundreds of different students, myself included.



**Mukul Deva**

The presentation that Deva gave revolved around his experience when it came to writing. In his presentation, he talked about his feelings and thoughts towards writing, and decided to share what he struggled with in writing, and how he overcame it. People who aren't very experienced with writing could feel excited to learn the process that a professional writer took when it came to writing a story. The problem is, Mukul Deva made it sound a lot easier than it really was.



Mukul Deva giving a presentation at the United World College of South East Asia

Why did he make writing seem a lot easier than it is? Mukul Deva stated that with a good plan, writing the actual story was easy, and that planning the story took a lot longer than writing the story itself. The plan that he used is as follows:

1. Planning
  - a. Develop the plot, setting, characters, and incidents
  - b. Create a story outline
  - c. Break it into chapters
2. Writing
  - a. Research
  - b. Validate
  - c. Write the Story
  - d. Edit
  - e. Submit

This is a plan that Mukul Deva applied to a majority of his books. Maybe the plan was significant, but it seems to be the same as any other plan. It could help people realise the specifics when it came to planning out a story, but it doesn't really account for all of writing like the way that Mukul Deva made it sound. Anyone could think that this plan would be really efficient. He managed to publish a bunch of books using this technique, there should be no way that it isn't the 'holy grail' of writing. The thing is that an approach like this may not be for everyone. So many people write in so many different ways, it's impossible to really find a method of writing that fits everyone. There could be some general ways that people could get started with writing, which could have been what Mukul Deva was trying to get out

of his presentation. If this plan could have worked for everyone, then why are more than half of the authors in the US self published? If this plan really did work for everyone, anyone could be able to publish a book without a huge amount of effort and still be successful. Writing is different for everyone, as everyone has their own style. This is why some writers are very successful, and some aren't.

Mukul Deva stated that at one point, he had an extremely hard time writing a part of his book featuring a female protagonist because his editor told him that the way that he expressed the female gender was incorrect. He had to write the the scenes out multiple times, getting rejected every time. Eventually, he did find a way to display the female gender properly, but even with a good plan, he struggled to make things work. Mukul Deva stated that the writing is really the easy part, even though in that situation he struggled multiple times.

While trying to search around for the problems that people generally have, a lot of the problems came down to motivation, or the flow of writing, rather than the plan itself. John Steinbeck, an American author who won a Nobel Prize in Literature has some really good advice on how to approach writing from a letter that he wrote in 1962 (paraphrased)



**John Steinbeck**

1. Write freely and as quick as possible. Write everything on paper, and never rewrite parts or fix any errors until the whole story is written.
2. Forget about the idea that you have to finish the book by a certain time. Work on the your story page by page, and once you've finished it, you'll be surprised to see that it's done.
3. Don't worry about your generalised audience. It will only pressure you and slow you down. It helps to think about one person and write to them.
4. If one part of a story keeps you stuck, leave it and move on. Once you're done with the story, you may find that the reason it gave you trouble is because it never belonged there in the first place.
5. When writing dialogue, say it aloud as you write it. It will help the phrase sound correct in speech.

By following this advice, people can work on trying to get their flow of writing to be more fluent, and in a faster amount of time. Some methods may work for some people, but in the end, everyone has their own writing style. You can't replicate a method someone has used and expect to gain the same results. Writing takes experience, and by following John Steinbeck's advice, you can gain that experience and learn to write in a style personal to yours.

