WRITERS' FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA

Writers helping writers

Since 1976, the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia (WFNS) has built on this foundational philosophy — **"writers helping writers"** — to support the craft of creative writing, the business of being a writer, and the promotion of Nova Scotia writers as integral to the province's cultural life and creative economy.

Our **800+ annual members** come from all career stages and parts of the province and engage in a diverse range of forms, genres, and writing practices.

writers.ns.ca/**Membership**

WFNS **General Membership** is open to anyone with an interest in writing, regardless of their writing experience or place of residence. General Members receive access to members-only programs and resources, discounts on program and registration fees, and our weekly email newsletter full of literary news, events, and opportunities.

WFNS is based in Kjipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki, ancestral & unceded Mi'kmaq territory.

writers.ns.ca | contact@writers.ns.ca
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RECOMMENDED WFNS PROGRAMMING

writers.ns.ca/**Workshops**

Our annual **in-person & virtual** creative and professional development workshops invite writers with similar interests to gather, share, and learn from experienced authors.

writers.ns.ca/**Programs**

Our annual programs create time, space, and occasion for creative writing.

The members-only **Coffee Chats** program and **Manuscript Review Program** help writers seeking affordable career/creative advice and feedback on works-in-progress.

The **Emerging Writers Prizes** support writers facing barriers to literary creation.

The **Jampolis Cottage Residency Program** hosts group retreats and solo residencies in Avonport, Nova Scotia.

The **Micro-Anthology Series** provides publication opportunities for emerging and established writers of romance, speculative, and crime & mystery fiction.

The **Nova Writes Competition** offers feedback on all entries and publication of the winning entries in an annual print anthology.

Writers In The Schools provides readings and workshops for students of every grade.

RECOMMENDED WFNS RESOURCES

writers.ns.ca/**Resources**

Our free public resources help writers to orientate within the writing and publishing landscape and plot their course forward.

Atlantic Publishers & Periodicals indexes the many presses and literary magazines based in the four Atlantic provinces and links to Canada-wide indexes.

NS Independent Booksellers summarizes local bookshop specialties and event spaces.

NS Literary Festivals, Book Fairs, & Reading Series helps writers discover and plan for annual reading, attending, and volunteering opportunities.

NS Writing Groups, with profiles of writers seeking writing groups and of writing groups welcoming new members, helps writers find peer-to-peer feedback on their work.

writers.ns.ca/**Calendar**

Our public **Literary Calendar** features Nova Scotian literary events organized by WFNS, by its members, and by local publishers, literary magazines, booksellers, libraries, universities, arts centres, and nonprofits.

WFNS **General Members** can submit events to the Literary Calendar and book free in-person space (Halifax) or virtual space (Zoom) for their own literary events.

Get Writing!

Advice & resources for building a creative practice

WFNS
WRITERS' FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA

"...Carve out a protected, focused, recurring time (and space) to write—and to write as much as possible. Being in contact with your writing practice, in a consistent way that works for you, will build your writing chops, your control over inspiration, and your word count."

Cooper Lee Bombardier (writer, visual artist)

MAKING SPACE

You can write anywhere, of course: the physical environment where you write creatively is less important than the *mental* space required for your imagination to roam and your skills with language to flex.

But shaping your physical writing space—or even a ritual you use to 'enter' a mental space conducive to writing, such as free-writing for fifteen minutes or fixing a specific beverage first—can help your brain get used to shifting from concern over daily stress to creative exploration. The more you establish a physical space as *set aside for your writing*, the faster you'll be able to get back into a creative head-space when you sit down to write.

Try one or more physical spaces, whether in public or in private, where distractions are scarce and you can lose yourself in thought. (A space where you'd normally *read* is a good first option.) Note how each space makes you feel—energized? frustrated? focused?—and choose a space that motivates you and your kind of writing.

At their core, **writing retreats** (for groups of writers) and **residencies** (for solo writers) are spaces that others have helped set aside for writing. Some writers are more productive in these spaces and this company; others miss their desk at home.

MAKING TIME

Making the time to write is often more challenging than making space. Along with balancing work, family, and other commitments, you'll find your mind is most creative at particular times of day.

Pay attention to when you *want* to write, and start small at that time of day or on that day of the week. Can you wake up 20 minutes early and write first thing in the morning? Can you schedule writing date for yourself each Thursday night?

If you sit down at your scheduled time and struggle with motivation to write, consider growing your writing community to include a fellow writer—or a whole writing group—who can check in and hold you accountable to your goals.

BUILDING YOUR PRACTICE

Making a habit of writing takes time and intention, but a regular writing practice will reward you with a greater volume of drafted writing to share and revise, more freedom to shift your focus from project to project, and simply more experience handling language as a creative medium.

"You can't revise a blank page! No matter how bad you *think your writing is, don't worry about it. Just write. Get to the end. The magic is in revision.* Also, *you don't need hours of uninterrupted time to write something worthwhile. I wrote a large portion of my most successful novel in 15- to 25-minute spurts. It can be done!"*

Charlene Carr (lover, novelist)

"It's more than your brain and your hands that write: there is an inner part of you that is connecting somewhere deep. Sink into that space. Perhaps this is one reason we are writers; we can hear what needs to be written. You can edit later for the world around you and the messages you want to share... but begin with that powerful place where the earth and our ancestors speak to us."

shalan joudry (poet, playwright, storyteller)

DRAFTING & REVISING

Few writers sit down and fill a blank page with polished sentences. Like a painting, sculpture, or song—a piece of creative writing develops through experiments, attempts, alternatives, and the addition, subtraction, and re-working of material. Most books you read are the product of dozens of rounds of revision and feedback and assistance from several editors.

When you start a new writing project, put completion, perfection, and your 'inner editor' on mute. It's crucial to oil the gears—to put ideas, feelings, sensations, and actions into words so that those words can spark further ideas.

Once you've written the first draft of your story or chapter or poem, you cannot be afraid to re-write (and re-write again), to cut or add lines or scenes, or to reorganize the plot. Call back your 'inner editor.' Put your draft away for a week and return to it like a reader. Ask fellow writers (or the readers in your life) for feedback.

A typical writing project will require you to cycle between drafting and revising. The key to keeping writing *enjoyable* is to shift with intention and purpose.

WRITERS' BLOCK

If you can't figure out the perfect phrase or your next plot point, consider exercise, reading, sleep, or a different, low-stakes creative activity: let your mind wander, and it will often keep working on creative blocks in the background.

Or bring the problem to a fellow writer, a writing group, or a creative writing workshop: even the feedback and advice you *don't* follow will broaden your awareness of possible creative approaches. Go to events, talk to other writers, follow them on social media, and read their interviews!

A writing community can also help you confront common motivational 'blocks' like self-doubt and imposture syndrome. Your combination of writing goals, challenges, and successes will be unique, but fellow writers can help you focus on what matters most: *enjoying the creative process.*

"Writing is a way of seeing, appreciating, and marvelling at the stories, people, snippets of conversation, colours, insects, plant-life, and funny little details whirling around me. It's a way of not letting busyness interfere with wonder. When I think of my writing practice as being this—attending o this unrepeatable life with language—ather than having anything to do with publishing, acceptances, rejections, prizes, and prestige, then I get to write all the time, even when I'm going for a walk, and I get to enjoy writing. [...R]emember why we likely became writers in the first place: because we love how words make us feel."

Heather Jessup (fiction writer, academic)