

We all have them

Wacky Writuals

Collection



Philip Pullman confessed that his blockbuster trilogy *'His Dark Materials'* was originally written in long hand on a specific type of paper – it had to be the kind with grey lines and a blue margin, and with only two holes punched in, not four. Pullman writes all his books in a specially-designed shed which includes a desk decorated with an old klim rug and an expensive orthopaedic chair.



Maeve Binchy loved to have BBC Radio 4 and instrumental Irish music playing in the background as she wrote.

Virginia Woolf, George Bernard Shaw and Roald Dahl did it in sheds at the bottom of the garden. (See E for Environment for some photos of these famous sheds).



Aaron Sorkin - As well as chain-smoking and index cards, the man behind *The West Wing* and *The Social Network* has a habit of acting out his zippy dialogue while gazing at his own reflection. In 2010, he worked himself into such a frenzy that he head-butted a mirror. "I wish I could say I was in a bar fight," confessed Sorkin, "but I broke my nose writing." [Seven Strange Writing Rituals](#)



Victor Hugo - the French novelist wrote both *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback Of Notre-Dame* in the nude. This meant he wouldn't be able to leave his house. As a safety measure, his valet was told to hide his clothes.



Francine Prose - The author of *Blue Angel* and the president of PEN American Center confided to the [Daily Beast](#) that when she's writing, she wears her husband's "red and black checked flannel pajama pants and a T-shirt." She also wrote facing a brick wall.

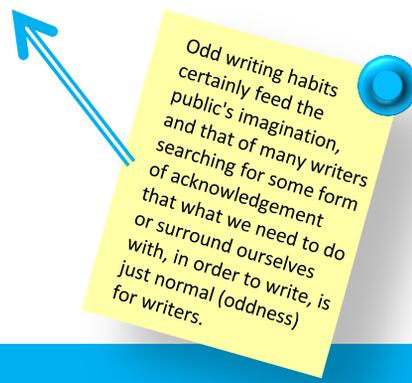


Dan Brown Starting at 4am each morning, he writes with an antique hour glass next to him on his desk. When the last grain drops every 60 minutes, he leaps to his feet and does a round of push-ups, sit-ups and stretches. He also occasionally uses gravity boots to hang upside down, all of which, he says "keeps the blood and ideas flowing". [Source](#).



Stephen King: "There are certain things I do if I sit down to write," he said. "I have a glass of water or a cup of tea. There's a certain time I sit down, from 8:00 to 8:30, somewhere within that half hour every morning," he explained. "I have my vitamin pill and my music, sit in the same seat, and the papers are all arranged in the same places. The cumulative purpose of doing these things the same way every day seems to be a way of saying to the mind, you're going to be dreaming soon". Source: Lisa Rogak, [Haunted Heart: The Life and Times of Stephen King](#), St. Martin's Press/Thomas Dunne Books.

Stephen King: always writes 10 pages a day, every day (including Christmas Day) before he allows himself to finish.

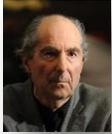


Odd writing habits certainly feed the public's imagination, and that of many writers searching for some form of acknowledgement that what we need to do or surround ourselves with, in order to write, is just normal (odds) for writers.

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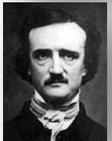
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Philip Roth. Roth works standing up, pacing around as he thinks. He claimed to walk half a mile for every page he writes. He works in a studio away from his house, and stands at a lectern to write.



William Wadsworth liked to narrate his poems to his dog. If the dog got upset or barked at the sounds of his words, he would start working on the poem again.



Edgar Allen Poe liked to have a cat sit on his shoulder when he wrote.



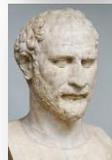
Ezra Pound would breathe exclusively through his mouth, only when writing.



William Faulkner preferred to type with his toes instead of his fingers. He kept his shoes on his hands while he worked.



Ernest Hemingway said he wrote 500 words a day, mostly in the mornings, to avoid the heat. He is also famously known for standing to write – wearing a pair of oversized loafers.



William Gibson : *“When I’m writing a book I get up at seven. I check my e-mail and do Internet ablutions, as we do these days. I have a cup of coffee. Three days a week, I go to Pilates and am back by ten or eleven. Then I sit down and try to write. If absolutely nothing is happening, I’ll give myself permission to mow the lawn. But, generally, just sitting down and really trying is enough to get it started”*. Source: [Paris Review](#), 2011.



George Orwell, Mark Twain, Edith Wharton, Winston Churchill, Truman Capote and Marcel Proust were all famous for churning out pages lying in bed.



John Cheever wrote mostly in his underwear.

Steven Pressfield, author of *The War of Art* recites Homer’s invocation of the Muse before he types a word. Shakespeare, Milton, and Chaucer also invoked these.

Demosthenes - The ancient Greek writer would shave half his head. By looking so idiotic, he ensured he would stay home and work, instead of going out to face the ridicule.

Preparation Rituals – things like clearing your desk, or reading over the day before’s writing
Productive Rituals – things like what clothes you must wear, what music you listen to, quotas you must meet before finishing
Reward Rituals – incentive programs, treats etc, but only after completing the task, or so many pages...