

Top 10 rules for writing fiction (or history essays)....

1. My most important rule is one that sums up the 10: if it sounds like writing, I rewrite it. (Elmore Leonard)
2. Cut (perhaps that should be CUT): only by having *no* inessential words can every essential word be made to count. (Diana Athill)
3. You most likely need a thesaurus, a rudimentary grammar book, and a grip on reality. This latter means: there's no free lunch. Writing is work. (Margaret Atwood)
4. Do change your mind. Good ideas are often murdered by better ones. (Roddy Doyle)
5. Learn poems by heart. (Helen Dunmore)
6. Do it every day. Make a habit of putting your observations into words and gradually this will become instinct. (Geoff Dyer)
7. Description is hard. Remember that all description is an opinion about the world. Find a place to stand. (Anne Enright)
8. Write in the third person unless a really distinctive first-person voice -offers itself irresistibly. (Jonathan Franzen)
9. Put it aside. Read it pretending you've never read it before. Show it to friends whose opinion you respect and who like the kind of thing that this is. (Neil Gaiman)
10. Increase your word power. Words are the raw material of our craft. The greater your vocabulary the more effective your writing. We who write in English are fortunate to have the richest and most versatile language in the world. Respect it. (PD James)