

Writing Success

The goal of this guide is to give a set of basic tips, tricks, and observations that I've made over time on how to be financially successful writing.

This is nothing about actually doing the writing itself. This is how to convert that writing to money.

If you just want to write, and don't care about the money? Probably not the guide for you.

These are quick, rambling thoughts of mine in no particular order.

A quick about me: I'm Selkie Myth, the author of *Beneath the Dragoneye Moons*. I've managed to make a comfortable living off of my story, but more importantly, various tips and tricks I've given to other authors have also seen their financial success improve.

These aren't just things I've done, but also things I've studied other authors doing. The items are in no particular order.

Have a good cover

There's a saying "don't judge a book by its cover", and that's because most people DO. It's the first thing that people see, the first impression they get of your story. A bad cover or no cover will sink you. A good cover works, and a great cover can do significant work.

Invest in a good cover.

I recommend custom commissioning artwork from a good artist, but I know that's not always possible. There are "pre-made" covers out there that are cheap, and it's worth browsing for a good one.

Don't write a great story, then punt it all because you go cheap on the cover. A bad cover can utterly ruin an otherwise great story, because people will see it and bounce.

Write what people want to read

This one's a little different from the rest of my advice. If you want to make a true living off of this, and not just write for fun, you're going to have to write a story that people want to read.

This doesn't apply to people who genuinely want to write THEIR story, and only incidentally monetize it, but it does apply to anyone who says "I want to write for a living."

The best stories are the ones that the author loves to write, that's exactly what people want to read, but that's a rare confluence.

Want to make money?

Write something people want to read.

Editing is important, but not THAT important.

Edit your stuff. Read it over. Fix the typos.

End of the day, it's not worth agonizing a ton over, and it's rarely worth shelling out for a proper editor.

See **Beta Readers** further on.

Quantity, not quality

If you have beautiful flowing prose that just lights the imagination, more power to you!

However, web serials are a numbers game. The more words you can write, the better off you'll be. Frankly, people enjoy reading 10k mediocre words, than the most beautiful 1k words. If you need to decide between 10k OK words, and 1k perfect words?

The 10k OK words will get you paid more.

Quantity, not quality.

Same heading as before :P

You've written 10k words. Great!

A single 10k chapter once a week doesn't "play" the algorithms as well as 5 chapters of 2k words. Readers like the 'hit' of a new chapter. Getting a new installment.

They like more frequent, smaller chapters.

Some authors don't like breaking their stuff up. That's understandable.

But the people who do lots of smaller chapters ALL do significantly better than those who don't.

Except Pirateaba.

But they're an abomination of writing, who casually drops 35k word chapters twice a week, looping back to earlier -

Quantity, not quality.

Communicate early, communicate often.

Basically the title. Your announcements and updates and details are going to get lost in the noise. If you have something to say, you need to say it multiple times.

I do it twice - once early, once right before it matters. AKA whenever the change you're about to make goes live.

Communicate early. Communicate often.

Keeping to your promises

Webserialists have a bad reputation. Too many authors have burned out spectacularly when writing behemoths of a story. This has made readers understandably skittish.

Figure out what you can deliver. Communicate it. **STICK TO IT.**

It's better to be the author who publishes 3 chapters/week and religiously meet it than an author who usually publishes 4 chapters/week but misses a post every month.

Related - if you publish 4 chapters/week and communicate that you take a one week break every month? You're golden.

Stick to your promises and commitments.

Patreon and their tiers.

There are a lot of benefits you can offer patrons. Discord roles. Side stories. Worldbuilding. Cameos.

The only thing people “really” sign up for are advanced chapters. Look at any web serial patreon. The tier with the “max” advanced chapters is the one with the most people. The rest of the benefits are rarely attractive.

The only benefit I’ve found that moves the needle apart from advanced chapters is lewd content, generally explicit scenes not found in the main story.

Readers look at “What tier gets me all the advanced chapters?”, and base their decision if they want to buy that tier, or not. That’s the “max tier”, and it anchors everything you do.

1 chapter at \$1 (bad idea), 5 chapters at \$5, 10 chapters at \$10, and 20 chapters at \$20 has people snapping to the \$20 tier, and wondering about that. Rarely will people sign up for the other tiers (although the min/lowest tier also gets some attention//the people who want to give you token support)

Onto a detailed breakdown of how the most money is obtainable with Patreon:

\$10 max tier hits the sweet spot of “people sign up for this” and “You make good money”. Higher than \$10 and people balk - even if there’s a \$10 tier with chapters. Lower than \$10 gets more people signing up, true, but not quite enough to offset the lack of \$\$\$.

In **Keeping to your promises**, my max tier is \$5 and is staying \$5, but I personally estimate that if I made it \$10, ~80% would convert over.

That's if I forced the conversion, instead of "gently" converted.

Gentle conversion: Legacy (Unpublish) the old tier, but continue granting the same access - you made a promise after all - and everyone new has to sign up at the higher tier.

Forced conversion: "Hey all, this tier now gets less//the other tiers now get more" - believe it or not, readers see that the same.

If I kept my \$5 tier at +20, and made the \$10 tier +30, readers would consider that almost the same as if I made the \$5 tier go from +20 to +10, and the \$10 tier stayed at +20.

Vanity tiers are good. Make a \$50, \$100 tier, for the people who really, REALLY want to give you their money. They're rare, but the 10 patrons I have at \$50 represent \$500/month that I otherwise wouldn't be getting - nothing to sneeze at!!

My personal recommendations if I had to redo all my tiers:

- 1) \$3 "teaser" tier - a few chapters ahead. \$3 is basically the lowest you can go without fees eating you alive. It's really not worth having a \$1 or \$2 tier. The fees are murder.
- 2) \$10 "main" tier - all the chapters ahead. Some bonus stuff.
- 3) \$15 "Advanced" tier - Side stories. Lewds. Bonus content. Etc. Just a little extra for those people.
- 4) \$25 "Cameo" tier - the high effort things.
- 5) \$50 "Vanity" tier - for people who want to give you ALL THE MONEY.

Communicate when things go wrong!

Life happens. Shit happens.

If you're going to miss a post - and everyone does, I even miss posts with a 3 week backlog! - communicate it! Tell people what's going on. Doesn't even have to be fancy.

"Hey everyone,

Sorry, I'm not going to be able to post this week. [Life happened] and it's completely thrown me.

I apologize.

~Author Name~"

Short, sweet, to the point. People understand, and if you've met all your promises so far? If life isn't taking a wrench to your kneecaps every other week?

People understand, and will stick with you and support you.

AS LONG AS YOU TELL THEM.

Also, don't only tell your patrons. Tell your free readers as well! They're invested, they deserve to know what's going on.

If you're going to only tell your patrons, for heaven's sake, make the post public so free readers can find and read it.

Don't make the post, and only allow your premium readers to access it. That's almost as bad as not saying anything.

“Yes, I’m deliberately not letting the \$1 plebs know what’s going on.
MUWAHAHAHAHAHA!”

I’ve seen it.

Did NOT do good things to their reputation.

If you have an additional backlog, you can always post out of that backlog as well.

Other Income Sources

1) Amazon’s KDP

Amazon’s publishing service, to sell your ebooks on. This does NOT require that you take your story down from anywhere else, and can be extremely lucrative. I make ~\$12-14k a month on Patreon, and \$3k/month on Amazon (\$6k on new book launch months)

Don’t ignore this! It’s fantastic money, if a little annoying and daunting to set up the first time. I leave the actual setting up mechanics to all the other guides on the subject on the internet.

2) Kindle Unlimited

A boatload of money, it’s seriously worth looking into the pros and the cons of KU. The pro: Money, and a new audience. The con: Need to take it down off of RR and Patreon. If RR isn’t providing enough new readers (Or if the weighted new readers don’t match against the fewer KU readers + their cash), it’s well worth looking into moving your story off of RR and onto KU. You’ll only want to move the early books, and leave the last 1-2 books up on RR. This keeps the RR readers around, slowly converting them. It also gives the KU people an easy “read more!”, and they’re already used to paying for content. After the nice free hit of the RR content, it’s easy to convert them to Patreon once they hit the very end.

Frankly. Going KU is likely the correct choice when only considering money. I am, as of writing this, NOT on KU, because A) I can afford not to be on KU, and B) I want to be the author I wish there was more of when I was a little reader, devouring all the stories I could find.

3) Audiobooks

You've already done the hard part writing the story and growing an audience. Audiobooks can be handled in two different ways:

A) Sell the rights to a publisher

This is the easy option. Find a publisher, sign the contract, get money. No fuss on your part, someone else does all the work, you get a slice of the pie. However, it's not nearly as much as you could make if you did it all yourself. At the same time? No work and effort in an arena you know nothing about, no upfront costs

B) Do it yourself

Higher risk, higher reward. Shell out thousands on a narrator, but if it's a hit, you get to keep all the money.

A is safe. B is high risk, high reward. If your novel isn't a moderate to large hit, I recommend A. If you've got a hit on your hands, and have the extra money to invest in your novel? Check your risk tolerance, and consider B.

Make the business decision

There will have to be some sacrifices made. It is extremely rare that you'll be able to simply purely write, and make a solid income out of it.

Sometimes, a compromise or two is needed. Finding a breaking point in that 5k word chapter to make it two chapters, for example.

Artwork is a poor return on investment.

I like commissioning artwork of my characters and world.

It is a SHIT return on investment. It's not worth it.

Get art if it tickles your soul, but apart from cover artwork, you won't be seeing a return on the investment.

Unless it's a marketing pitch.

Market yourself!

You've written the Next Big Novel. Congratulations!

You need to market yourself. You need to both sell the novel to prospective new readers, then convert readers to patreon/Amazon/dollars.

There are two stages:

1) Get eyeballs on your story!

- a) Royal Road is the single best platform I know for discovery. Trending, Rising Stars, New Stories, recently published, and more! Scribblehub has a mediocre discovery mechanism, and I don't know about the rest. Either way, you need people reading your story first.
- b) Plug your story on discord, on the forums, reddit, facebook, anywhere you can get away with it. Don't just plug and run, be a part of the community! It's hard, it's a lot of work, but it's worth it.
- c) Ask authors for shoutouts. Best if your story is similar to theirs

2) Turn eyeballs to money.

- a) Shamelessly plug your patron, Audible, Amazon books, etc at the end of your chapters. Let people know what you have. Give them the "ask". For example:



b)

c) And that's just the start!

Discord for chatting: <https://discord.gg/GStatMC>

Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/SelkieMyth>

Ko-Fi: <https://ko-fi.com/selkiemyth>



I'm on top web fiction! [Vote here!](#) Elaine will share a mango with you if you vote!



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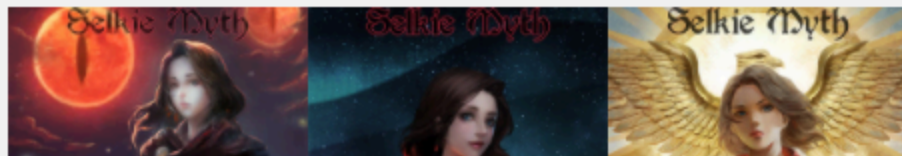


Audiobooks!

[Book 1 Audiobook here!](#)

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d)



e)

f) Plugs.

Nobody is going to do it for you

Ok, this one's a bit of a lie. You *can* sign over your rights to a publisher and have them take over all of this - along with getting a hefty cut of your profits!

Apart from that though, nobody is going to do this stuff for you. Nobody else is going to plug your story in a dozen discords. Nobody else is going to plug your story on reddit or facebook. Nobody else is going to ask your fans to pay you money.

It's better to be Deep than Wide.

This ties back to quantity, not quality.

People like long, deep stories for the most part. If you've got the energy to write 10 chapters a week, you will do far better writing 10 chapters in a single story, than 2 chapters in 5 stories.

It also plays to popular this week and other metrics better, along with readers just flat out liking it more.

Treat it like a job because it is

Don't wait for "inspiration". Don't say you'll do it later.

Writing is a job. Treat it like one, and it'll reward you for it.

Yeah, sometimes days are a bust. Sometimes it's hard to write. Gotta buckle down and just do it.

Make a community, and be part of it

Be part of your community! Manage it. Grow it. Make a discord server. Have fancy roles. Talk with people in the comments section. Ban the trolls.

Be part of the greater writing community. The only people who know what you're going through are other writers. We're a nice, supportive lot. Talk with us! We'll help!

We don't bite!

Betas are worth their weight in gold

Really, there's not much to this. Good beta readers are invaluable.

Cliffs in moderation

Cliffs are great for getting people to sign up for patreon. Too many cliffs burns readers out (although some authors disagree with this)

Study what other people do

This one's frankly more optional. I do it, and it works well for me. You don't have to do it, but it'll help you in the long run.

First case of studying other people though? A few links to other writers and their thoughts

- 1) TheFirstDefier: <https://www.royalroad.com/forums/thread/116847>
- 2) PirateAba: <https://wanderinginn.com/writing-faqs/>
- 3) Shirtaloon:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1t90XK1Wp3gtQwIFlrRyVb9hZAt_PJWTKwJB3vf3wAVE/edit

Plan for success, set things up ahead of time

If you start writing and immediately post, you're going to be in a world of hurt.

Get your patreon sorted ahead of time, before you post your first chapter.

Have your patreon backlog ready already.

Set up your discord server ahead of time.

All of these things take TIME, something you're not going to have a lot of when you launch.

Also, I've seen numerous authors just DIE when they're like "Oh, I'm successful, now I need to make a patreon", and then just die in a fire when they can't make the backlog chapters and meet their prior commitments.

If you find yourself in that spot?

- 1) Don't panic.
- 2) Don't burn out.
- 3) Pretending you're on a 3 chapters/week schedule:
 - a) Announce on RR that you're making a patreon
 - b) Announce at the same time that you're cutting back on RR to make your backlog
 - c) Post 2 chapters/week on RR, 3 chapters/week on Patreon, and try to squeeze in an extra chapter when you can to get patreon's backlog beefier.
 - d) Modify the numbers as above for however many chapters/week you're posting.

Look after yourself

Don't burnout. Have plans for self-care. Don't push yourself to the max constantly.

Burnout's ugly, and will implode your entire series if it isn't handled or managed well.