**10 proven and simple ways to write a book.**

It is strange how much faith we put in the fact that others can do this better. That everyone else knows how to do things - whether it's about cooking, fixing a car or to hit on a girl/boy.

And of course, some are better than others. Why? Well, here are some options. Some may invoke talent. Some may have had a good education and still others simply like what they are doing.
But for me, it boils down to one thing:

**Practice, practice, practice.**
Having done one thing enough times naturally increases the possibility of making the most obvious mistakes (have we all been there when it comes to picking up a girl or a boy?) And we have all heard about the 10 000-hour rule. (The 10,000-hour rule, which was popularized by Malcolm Gladwell's blockbuster book "Outliers." As Gladwell tells it, the rule goes like

this: it takes 10,000 hours of intensive practice to achieve mastery of complex skills and materials, like playing the violin or getting as good as Bill Gates or writing books – which contains some truth, but on the other hand – doesn't.)

And all those who claims to "master the art of…", may share some tips and tricks, which you read about, possibly follows, or you don't?
Some of us are nerds and keep on looking for more information, preferably online and we find a lot.

That was my situation when I sat down to write about how to write a book. Everywhere I found possible methods, templates, mantras and advice and tips and God know what I did not find. I even think I discovered some new religions.

Some of it I recognized, some was completely unknown, some were ok tips, but most of it was about how each person experienced their way of writing.

And here I am at the point.

*We each have our own way of approaching the wisdom.*

Enthusiasm is a good motivator.
Knowledge of what you are writing about is a different quality.
Time to write is also an ingredient.

I leaned back in my chair after a round of online searching all over the world and found out the same thing that you'll find out eventually - (if you have not already done so) -
We each have our own way of writing. But we can receive (good) advice in order to make it work for us and our style of writing.

Enough said. Here's my way of writing. (It has mostly been created during my "career" and has gradually become my way of doing things. Adjustments I have made have been more on the time saving part and technical dips that I use, than a change in methodology).
I will give you a list of such things in another blogpost.
**This is a methodological consideration of the writing process.**

(I will later tell about how the development of character and action can be done.)

### #1: Motivation to write
Ask yourself what makes you want to write a book. Fame, honor, money, to receive unconditional admiration, world domination? Or do you go for a change of the world / society / those around you? Is your motivation to scare the shit out of people?

Whatever the motivation: it should be there. My motivation for writing is to reach out with some message that might affect people. Anyway, it was that in the beginning. Now I write because I think it's nice. It's my way of having a good time. I still have a message in my heart, but have realized: after money, fame, nosebleed admiration, change of world / society / those around me, world domination - failed, it boils down to entertaining people (and maybe scare the shit out of some of them.)

In short, you must feel the joy and the benefit of doing this. And as little money, honor and fame there is in our industry, that should certainly not be the motivation.

## #2: Idea

You bring that onboard yourself. And you probably already have a good idea of what to write about.

I always spend a lot of time in the idea phase. And now I have to be honest. The idea seldom comes as a call from God or some revelation that stands out and shines before me like a burning thorn bush, where I must sacrifice my child to be able to continue, etc. No, it is more pragmatic than that.

A piece of music, an association, (preferably while the music is playing), a glance, a glimpse of a face, a smell. Maybe a title suddenly appears in my head, and I start thinking about it. I write all my material in a notebook (which I always have with me. I will return to the usefulness of non-technical things further down) In the notebook I write down small observations, descriptions, words that I steal, (Yes, we writers steal like ravens), expressions that I hear. I often flip through my notebooks while listening to music,

…and before I know it, I have started on the BOOK.

## What if…?

I have two words that I always use at the beginning of everything that is about getting an idea. The two words are What if. (What if, if at… something like that. You get the point.) I can read about a girl who disappears and may even be found again the same afternoon in good shape, at the neighbor's, where she had dinner without telling her parents. But I stop after she has disappeared and ask the question: What if? What if she does not show up? What if she disappears for good? And if it's about more than just a girl disappearing? And there I just gave you the beginning of my latest book Solefall. (In English the title will be Sunfall- it is not translated yet.)

## #3: Plot

As I mentioned, I always have a notebook with me. In it, in addition to observations and everything that really comes to mind, I write (I have about 50 of these books now), also longer dialogues. At the back of the notebook, I start writing chapter headings. That may not be the final names of the chapters, but it is a guideline for the development of the plot in the book in chronology order. Each chapter/development gets one or two lines in the notebook. They may look like something like this:
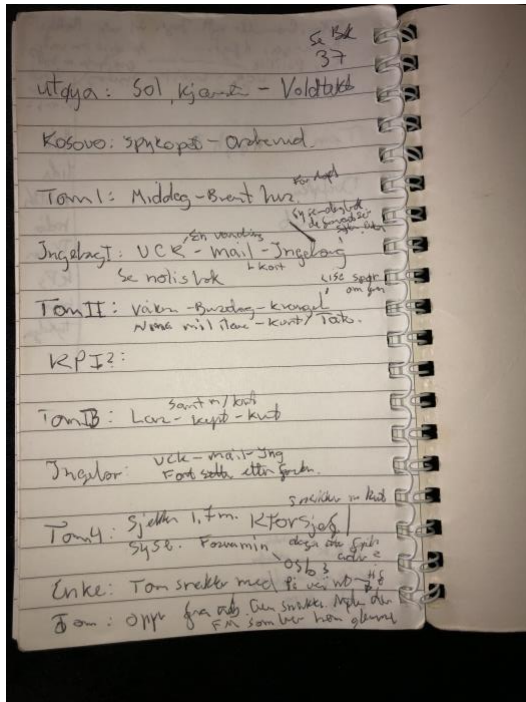
Copy of the back of my notebook #45.

This was the chapter/plot headings of my book Aftermath.

**Having the "whole" story in your head**
The whole story is often in my head, helped by these chapter headings, before I start the serios Mac writing. But the transition from having noting to start writing is fluid. And here I may be making a mistake. I'm often starting to write on the computer too late. By that I mean I write more and more in the notebook. Sometimes I have written several pages with dialogues that belong under a chapter. I have often written the whole fuck… chapter in the notebook. And with my handwriting and a stained pen, you can only imagine how much I swear when I try to decipher what might have been gold well written content. My point is that when I have gone through the story in my head, have a lot of useful stuff in the notebook, then I should find the Mac and start writing there instead ;)
Of course, this does not mean that the notebook will be put away. As I said, it's with me everywhere. If I stop and do not know where I am going while I am on my computer, I close the Macbook, take the notebook with me and disappear into nature, a bottle of vodka or something like that. (Just kidding – I never disappear in the nature)

**#4: The writing process.**
I start with the end. Having minimized the use of a notebook, I will now highlight the benefit of writing in it. If I have a chapter or two or parts of a dialogue (which I know exactly where to use, I like to start with it.) I write it out on the computer, saving the document as the chapter heading.) If you interpret the picture of the notebook further up in the text, see you may say that it says "Kosovo, psychopath - Orderud " on a line. The chapter will of course not be called that, but it will be a chapter in a book, but with a different heading. Presumably it will contain something from Kosovo, included a psychopath, and something with the name Orderud.

To summarize:

- #1. I write a lot in my notebooks

- #2. I switch to PC (Mac) when it's getting ready to write chapters and longer stuff.

- #3. But I also use Mac / PC to write down what I have written on the back of the notebook. (this is where I try to shorten the use of non-digitized media;) The reason is that the chapters change all the time. It used to be that I knotted more and more, less understandable things in the notebook. Instead, I now enter the freshest and latest edition of the back of the notebook in a document on PC / Mac and edit it from there.

- #4. You can call this document a rough outline, because that is what it is and in the future it will be.

I divide the rest of the writing process into two:

#### #5: Outline
I change the order of the chapter headings all the time. But in the end, they are named as they will be in the final book. The reason for changes may be that every time I play the film about the book in my head, there are logical flaws and chronological changes. (Things are constantly evolving)

When it starts to take shape, I save the document. We can call it draft one. Then I take up the same thing, make some changes, write something under the headings and save it as draft 2, etc. The reason is that here I can have fun typing in a kind of brain map. For example, I can type in under "Tom with a lawyer" (a chapter heading that will of course be changed both in title and order later. The point is that the book will have a chapter where Tom, my main character) is with a lawyer.)
Here I can either retrieve what I have of dialogues, observations, events, or preferably entire chapters that are in the notebook. Let's say I have anywhere from 100 to 1000 words with what I call "brain maps" lying under this chapter. Then each and every one of us has something to continue working on, right?

This means that I can either print the chapter based on the "brain map" or I will probably go much further in knowing what exactly this chapter is about.

This mind map (as I call it. Others mean scribbles, bits of things I thought when I wrote it in the notebook, everything that I think can be linked to a specific place in the chronological overview of the chapters, as you saw them in the notebook further up .) can be used as a major helper whenever I am stuck.

As this grows (and it does), I save version two, version three, etc. They get bigger and bigger. I rarely delete anything. Many times, I like to print two, three versions of, for example, the lawyer scene. No one is deleted, I just create multiple versions of the document.

Important! Back up everything along the way. Remember that this is creative work. It cannot be recreated by memory or in any other way. This is not to say that if you are going to recreate something, it will get worse. But, still, Backup, backup, backup. (Believe me, I learned it in the least pleasant way;)

## #6: The writing process continues.

Do not forget that I constantly use the notebook diligently. Certainly, old books that had nothing specific to do with this project are also used. There are dialogues, things and ideas that can be used. I have a system, which means that if I use something from my notebook in a published book, I write a code in the notebook, which means that I do not use it again in another edition. I don't want to repeat a dialog or a scene word for word. That is embarrassing. My first notebooks are starting to get reasonably empty of things I can use.

Although the chapters are written in chronological order, this is not said that things are written in chronological order. It is (for me) more the exception than the rule. I like to start with the end. It may well be the end that triggered the idea. (Often it is) Certainly something emotional that made me think further about a title, which in turn made me think of a story, which in turn gave me a plot. I hope you comprehend the irrational wanderings into such a universe. ;)

If I start with the end, I have gained the experience that it is usually good. My endings are the part of the material I rarely write more than 2-5 times. Everything else is written over and over and repeatedly. (But do not lose motivation. As long as you feel you are writing better, it's just fun.)
I will return to how the actual characters, situations and writing develops over time.

When a chapter begins to take shape, I do the following: I copy it from the latest draft (3,4,5 or whatever the number is). If you have six, the last draft usually is the most complete.

Once retrieved, it is saved as a separate document under the chapter name. (which is still a work under progress.) To use the example from Solefall: where Tom is in the lawyer scene, it was called *Tom 3* in the making of the book. In the book it got the title:
*Støren. Afternoon.*


Explanation: I probably wrote 6 or 7 drafts and the final most finished draft was called Tom 3. Tom 3 was, of course renamed, Støren. Afternoon, when the book was finally finished.

## Correct the typos

The first thing I do is correct the typos. (I have corrected the grammar along the way. Some say that you should not do it. You should write as you go. And I agree to a certain extend.) The first things I write are incomprehensible to others than me. My machine has a correction key that gives a red line below what I write if it is wrong. In draft six, when we start to come up in ten, twenty thousand words, the correction function gives up. Then there is so much error that the error functionality stops. When it comes to correcting things: I starts to correct a bit as I write the draft. I have to do it so that it is easier for me to read back. So, I do it only because it is better to read my own material this way. But keep in mind that those who say that you should not think of spelling while writing something funny or scary or sad, or beautiful - or to put it another way, when you "create" - they are absolutely right. Do not do it. Write freely. Let your fingers run so-called freely over the keyboard, just to avoid clichés like the one I served in the previous sentence. Let things roll out of your head, through your fingers and into the mac or PC. Do not hold anything back. I like to laugh when I write, or I curse, or getting horny - whatever. (That's why there are not many sex scenes in the Tom Falck books)

But this interferes a bit with the development of the material and the character descriptions, which I will write about later.

I have noticed that if I do not write so well, (and that happens often, more than you might think) I still know that I am very skilled in terms of reading what is written well. I think it's because of the hundreds and hundreds of books I've read. I was an avid reader nerd when I was a boy. (Or as my daughter calls me; a total loser;) )

My trips to the library were the highlight of the day. Walking in there, in the silence, with the smell of books in my nose ... (Used books smell very special, right?) The calm and peace I felt then, was very special. And if I wandered out again after finding what I was looking for, preferably ten books (do not remember how many we were allowed to bring, but I remember I could pick a sizable pile) That time was my happiest.

All these words have made me capable to read and notice what is well written and not well written. But where I really have my strength is that I am good at reading my own material. In other words: I know what is well written and not. And it's so helpful. Therefore, when the chapter is printed - preferably completely on paper. After x number of corrections - and I read it for the first time, as my future readers would do – at that moment, for the first time I can tell if this is good or not. (Not so dramatic, maybe, I have a certain indication some time before this moment), but the fact is that there have been cases where I have corrected and corrected and corrected and finally threw all the shit out. This rarely happens, because the quality checks I do along the way by doing it in the order I have outlined here (draft 1,2,3) prevents such mistakes from happening. But it happens. Still, most of the time I see that this works well, and I leave it that way.

And then I move on to the next "chapter".

I'm not even aware when the book is finished. I see this when I go through the chapters and can happily check what has been written, check, check, check…etc.

And, when everything is ready, the real work begins.

## #7: The finish and the research

¨Yes, you were right. I am a writer who research afterwards. It may give me a lot of rewriting and extra work, I know. A lot is researched in advance, of course. The plot is born from the fact that I talk to people who give me information, so I research a bit all the time. Furthermore, I am motivated when I write, which means that all information I come across from what I write about is read and digested. (Newspaper, films, other books, facts about everything remotely linked to what I am writing about is in front of my interest all the time.) But then there are the exceptions. In the draft it usually marked "xx" or something in parentheses. For example: (check this!)

And then I check. In the book Aftermath, the son of my main character got meningitis during the book. Of course, I had to know what it was. I read about the disease. Twenty pages. I digested and for a 48 hour period I was a champ in the diagnosis.

Do you know how much was included in the book? Four sentences. I'm not kidding. Four sentences were written about the illness of the son of the main character. If it was necessary to

read so much for so little? Absolutely. It is the knowledge that embraces broadly that gives credibility when I write. My first book [The Long Way Home](#) is an example of this. I was in the war zone, experienced all the emotions associated with it and was a living reseached person when I got home. For better or worse. (By the way, I have taken a lot of interpersonal reactions and directly good observations from the Lebanon era in all my books.)
That aside: Research is fun.

I find a lot of strange things that still interest me. And along the way, I get to know new people, new ways of looking at things and maybe even get associations that lead to the next book. (All my books are born at the end of the previous one and I wonder if it has something to do with the research I do.)

At the end of my second book, Delete, I happened to read (during research) some congressional hearings in the United States that were held in connection with the Rwandan massacres. And afterwards, my third book, Dreamland.com was born, a book that sold 15,000 copies in Denmark and had a large audience in my country.

Research is useful and never wasted.

### #8: Finish.
The finish is something that never ends. It is a kind of ending when I send the script to the publisher and another kind of finish when I start to work towards the publisher.
Here I will mention what I do before others read the script. Publishers have their own ways of doing things and it is different depending on the editors and publishers. It makes it difficult to say anything in general about it. Maybe I'll write something about how we do it on a later occasion. (But remember that I have had three publishers: CappelenDamm, Piratforlaget and Vigmostad & Bjørke. (Three of the biggest Norwegian publishers.) I have also had three different editors who in their own way are capable people, but they do things differently.

The first thing I do is re-read each chapter separately. There will always be some changes. The research leads to that. Besides, for me things I write today must mature over a couple of days. (Weeks). This means that if I write 1000 words today, they will be processed in the next two weeks.
After reading, correcting, changing, attributing, and deleting (I will come back to deleting in your own material. The most important attribute you must have in order to succeed with a good book is *killing your darlings*.)

**Fix your relationship**
Then I let the script rest. You read correctly. It must be put away. Try to avoid reading it for a week or two. Some need more time. Others shorter. I often break that rule myself and that's the dumbest thing I do. You get so tired of your own stuff that you can lose the ability to see where it's good, where it's bad and where things should change.
Therefore, leave it. Do something else. Fix the relationship with your cohabitant, wife or husband. (or the kids) All that is guaranteed to be something that should be fixed after you have been writing for a few months;)

**Read a good book**
When you bring it up again, I use this trick: I read a book or two by one or more authors who write really well. Certainly, someone you think writes much better than you.

I do this, not to steal anything, but to find the rhythm in the text. The musicality that makes that particular book so good. Read thoroughly the book, and then you read your own script. You will immediately see where it is good and where it is not so good. But do not be demotivated by the fact that it is things that should be changed. The authors you like and who seem to shake good books out of their sleeves have been through the same process. Trust me. It is the final product you read and the final product of, for example, Aftermath that is in the shops at the moment, tells nothing about years (literally) with curses and paraphrases. If you knew how much changes and bad sentences a book contains before the final product is available from a shop …you would be surprised.

When you come to a part in the book which is not making sense or isn't coherent, make a note. Or if you feel that there are things that need to go away. Remove it. But do not get hung up on little things. Wrong words and such you should just skip. Logical flaws: make a note. Remove sentences where you see that you say the same thing in many ways, etc. (As I said, I will return to how you write and develop elsewhere.)

It takes some time to read through but take breaks. Read the script as you would have read other books. Stop reading the other book from time to time. Use the script actively: Make notes, delete things, put notes to yourself on the paper.

After completing the first reading, I recommend that you make the changes you found and that you do it right away. Deletion, logical flaws. Do not try to attribute (write new stuff) so much. Just note that things need to be developed, deleted or attributed. Let your brain work with it without you sitting like a hawk over the keyboard.

Afterwards? I do not quite know. I use to calm down a bit. Write things to be developed further. Without it necessarily going straight into the script. I change dialogues, refine observations, look for better ways to say things. Hunting high and low for, precisely, clichés. Changing words, changing them back again and so on. If I have stolen something from other books (everyone does, relax) I change it until it becomes mine.

Then I read the script again. And maybe again and again. In short: this is a job that can take two or ten months. Solefall took a long time. This is due to a lot of things, but also to the fact that the plot or the book eventually became difficult to motivate myself for. You as a reader will probably say that the book seemed so well-crafted, easy and simple to read. (I hope so, anyway)

If you think this is a long time to spend on completing the script, then know that it differs from person to person. But keep in mind that the book, after it is finished, when it is in the store, or in the library, it will live for years, maybe decades. Then the tiling and reading word for word at the end becomes a trifle. Even if that "little thing" takes a couple of months.


## #9: Let others read your material.

Now we are in an area that is very scary for a lot of people. To share what you have written with others. But remember: It's useful. I'm not good at letting others read my texts. I discuss plots with my daughter and very few others. The first texts I start writing are rarely read by others. For the simple reason that they are incomprehensible. If I have a passage that is fairly readable, it happens that I let someone I trust read it, but you know how it is - People want to be kind and usually tell you that it is good no matter how bad it is.

That's the way it is with me too. Therefore, I have made it a rule not to let others read my own material until I have come a long way in the process. I have two or three people reading the material. Depending on what I write about.

**The "coded" feedback.**
The feedback is often coded. By that I mean that the feedback from the people tells me things about the script witch they never intended to tell me. But that gives me clues to what really is things which I should change. I "decode" and find out what they really mean by asking questions. If they cannot answer what happened here and there and if there were places they think it went too slow, etc., I will find out. For example, I got nice feedback from a reviewer a long time ago (Yes, now I'm talking about what happens to the script after it has been delivered to the publisher, but the story tells something about the "coding".) This was a reviewer of the older generation. (I hate them;) He used the "red" pencil and made corrections. And the reason I hate them is because I'm lazy. It involved an enormous amount of extra work when I had to correct all the comments and errors he had put on the paper in my own script and transfer it into the Mac. Today it is easier, we press "accept" or "change" on the machine. My point with this story is that the reviewer corrected a lot. But in some places, the red pencil had hardly been down on the paper, even if I saw that it was errors there. The conclusion: The parties where not much was corrected were the most exciting places in the book. Right? And thus I could see where things had to be changed or improved. And BTW: there's a reason why scripts are not proofread just once or washed once. The proofreaders are humans after all. They make mistakes too.

The feedback from those who read is valuable and important. Take criticism. That's one of the most important things you can do. No one writes bad. (I tell myself this mantra many times while I'm at it.) Even on a bad day, you don't write badly. Of course, you can write better, but you do not write badly.

Changing something that is not optimal is important. Do not fall in love with your own sentences. It's just words. It's not a question of your virtue or anything like that. If there is something your reader does not understand or understand, the chances are very high that ten thousand others will not understand either. Then it is not they who are stupid, It is up to you to make yourself understood.

**#10: Finishing work.**
Again, I have to be vague when it comes to time. Solefall took a long time. Almost two years. Much of this was due to the fact that I had to leave the script for several months because I simply lost concentration. I have something so nicely called PTSD, after experiences in Lebanon. (I have written a lot about it in my first book)

These things make me occasionally struggle with concentration, sleep, etc. But many times that is not really the problem either. The plot suddenly no longer caught my eye. And luckily, I had come so far that it was not urgent. (I never write against deadlines. It is recommended that it is not to be done. But if you are among the ones who works best under pressure (or stress as I call it) - go ahead. Be my guest;) )

The life situation around me was also a cause, it is therefore difficult to say why and how. But when this is written, it is also a fact that Solefall became as it was, perhaps due to delays on my part. I let it go so long that the plot became new for me again. And thus fresher. It became

easier to write the last words and sentences. Which perhaps led to that book becoming the lightest, most exciting thriller /crime novel I have ever written?

Thus, it is time to consider submitting the material to the publisher.

But that's a different story;)