

HOW TO EARN 6-FIGURES ON **M**edium.com

A GUIDE TO BUILDING
A MEDIUM-SIZED EMPIRE
WRITTEN BY A 6-FIGURE
MEDIUM WRITER



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Intro—My Unusual Path

I didn't start my writing career on Medium at all. Like most discoveries that end up changing your life, it happened by accident.

Writing for me started out on a Wordpress blog called Addicted2Success. It was run by a fellow Aussie named Joel Brown. With no experience and having never published an article on the Internet, in 2014 he allowed me to start publishing articles on his blog. The content that I published was of poor quality and contained interviews with entrepreneurs that I reached out to and lured into talking with me via Skype.

To put my writing in context, I grew up in Australia as a tall, skinny dude that played video games and studied sound engineering. I have no fancy university degrees, awards, letters after my name, or friends like Branson and Zucks. I'm just a regular Joe.

Medium began appearing in my Google Searches around 2012–2013. When I discovered the simple, minimalist layout, I fell in love instantly with the platform. The original days of Medium were edgy and you never knew what to expect. It was the first website for writers that reached the masses and featured zero advertisements. This was big.

Articles that contained the word F-word or had images that were provocative were allowed. If you wanted to rant about a product that ruined your life, you could. If you wanted to write a drunk piece about what it was like to break up with your girlfriend, you could. The early days of Medium were the wild west and the platform's gorgeous user interface full of white space was hard not to admire. Medium was also different because for the first time ever you could have large images that were 5000 pixels or more and of ginormous file sizes like 10MB. This led to Medium not just becoming a place for writing, but for illustrators and photographers to show off their work.

The first article I ever published on Medium was in 2016 (although my Medium account was suspended a while back and when it was reinstated, the joining date was changed [sad face]). The initial strategy was just to copy and paste articles that came from the Wordpress blog I was publishing on already to see what would happen. Surprise, surprise, not much happened. Like a dumb dog that chases its tail for no reason, I kept publishing on Medium using the same strategy.

About twelve months after the first story, things began to change. Readers on Medium began taking notice of my work and leaving me comments to highlight what they learned. "Could I be a teacher?" was one thought I had. Initially, all I got from Medium were claps (likes) and comments. This was the fuel that kept me going—plus my own stupidity not to realize that my writing skills were terrible.

Along the journey, Medium Publications became a way for me to reach more people. Medium heavyweights like Chad Grills and Ali Mese accepted me into their publications and gave me a bigger voice.

Then something unexpected happened out of nowhere: Medium allowed writers to earn money from their stories. Joining Medium was never about money for me and so when this change happened, I ignored it for the most part. As part of the transition you could either publish free stories, or put your stories behind the paywall and earn money.

All my stories continued to be free and that allowed me to expand my audience quicker than other writers on the platform who chased money. Then Medium changed again and made it so that unless you put your stories behind the paywall, you wouldn't reach many people. Upon turning on monetization on my account, the dollars trickled in. The first month my take-home pay was \$252, then \$95 and then \$11. I was actually going backwards as the months went on...haha! Thankfully, things turned around before it completely hit \$0 :)

Now I earn more than six-figures a year from being a writer and have been offered multiple book deals. I don't tell you that to humblebrag my way into the record books and make you feel like dirt; I tell you that because if I can do it with no experience, poor writing skills, zero computer skills and a face that is the opposite of Brad Pitt's, then you sure as heck can.

Medium has changed my life and got me through losing my job, breaking up with multiple girlfriends, starting a business, having a near-miss with cancer and battling mental illness.

This short eBook will help you master Medium for yourself and can be read at any point in time and be helpful regardless of any functionality or visual changes to the Medium app/website.

There will be no fluff, bullshit, hollow promises, upsells, a hundred and one links to my work, personal brand jargon, dreams of Lambo's, selfies with Einstein, or tech talk/acronyms that make you feel stupid. We're going to get straight to the point and have you up and running as quickly as possible on Medium.

This is the guide I wish existed at the beginning of my writing career. Nobody told me any of this; I just had to learn it all for myself which took up a lot of my time that could have been spent writing.

I'll provide insights from my own experience (on Medium, from many of the top writers on Medium who I know personally) (and who have also been offered book deals or already published bestselling books), carefully curated gems from books on writing that are carefully curated to be useful, and finally my experience in building up a large following on other social media platforms such as LinkedIn.

In the process of teaching you how to master Medium, you're going to learn about writing, marketing, social media and what you can do beyond Medium. Writing is about more than Medium and a diversified approach is always best—in case Medium goes bankrupt or change their rules.

In the following pages I hope you'll be inspired to embrace Medium or, at the very least decide to start sharing your thoughts with the world in the form of words, audio, video, photography, or hand drawn illustration.

You can be anything you want in life and achieve the impossible. I truly believe that.

Chapter 1—Why Choose Medium to Write On

There are thousands of places you can write on the internet and many of them can help you earn money. You might be thinking, “Why the heck would I choose Medium to publish on?”

This is easy to answer and let me give it to you straight amigo. Medium was founded by Ev Williams who also Co-Founded a social media platform called Twitter with the bird that tweets—you know the one. Ev and his team have completely rethought and disrupted the existing model for the written word on the internet.

The old model for writing was broken. There were a few options:

Option One

You published your work on your own blog and then tried as hard as you could to get it found via your own social media channels and by destroying the content and filling it with keywords to allow the effects of SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) to help your work be found.

Option Two

You publish your work on someone else’s blog/website and be paid via exposure rather than money. The website hosting your work would make money by jamming lots of ads all throughout the written content and interrupting the reader’s desire to read something useful with videos that would autoplay and annoying popups.

Option Three

You publish your work on social media directly and be paid in followers who you couldn’t contact directly via email. The vanity metrics of follower counts and the number of likes/comments were supposed to keep your stomach full, but it left writers starving.

These options were terrible for writers. And if you wanted to go from being a blogger to publishing your own book, you were at the mercy of the gatekeepers known as the major publishers. You had to pitch them, kiss ass and pretend you liked them only to settle for a very small royalty that would see you continuing to be broke. You are more likely to win the lottery than to become as big as JK Rowling from Harry Potter fame.

Your chances of succeeding as a writer under the old models were highly-unlikely. Medium changed the game.

They did it by creating a two-sided marketplace consisting of readers and writers. They spent massive amount of time focusing on the experience of both sets of users, and finding ways to keep both happy and deliver value to readers, and paycheques to writers and perhaps avenues to bigger opportunities later on.

By writing on Medium, you can focus on the writing and not have to waste your time maintaining your own website, paying for hosting and web developers, tinkering with the

dark art of SEO, spamming people with emails desperately asking them to read your work, and sharing your work on every social media platform known to humankind.

(Now while Medium can do everything, I still recommend later on adding your own blog to de-risk your approach to writing—I will cover this soon.)

By not getting caught up in all the distractions that have nothing to do with writing, you get to hone your craft and focus on writing better—a writer’s cotton candy dream!

Now you know why so many writers are flocking to Medium and leaving behind the old options that serve nobody.

It’s not just writers that are coming to Medium in droves; readers are doing the same. Research conducted by writer Quincy Larson who analyzed many of the top stories confirmed that there are two reasons readers come to the site:

- To get motivated
- To learn more about their field of expertise

By understanding the motivations of writers and readers, you can best position yourself for success on Medium.

Chapter 2—Select an outcome for your writing

Before you join Medium, you need to select what outcome you're trying to achieve as a writer. This is a crucial step because if you don't know your outcome, you can't get the best out of the platform.

For example, if your goal is to make as much money as possible through Medium directly via the Partner Program they offer, the strategy is different from someone who just wants to collect the maximum number of email subscribers. Here are the outcomes you can choose:

1. Earn money (part-time or full-time)

You can use Medium as a way to supplement your income or you can make it your full-time job the way popular writers like Shannon Ashley, who is a single mother, has done for herself entirely through Medium.

2. Promote a business

You can use Medium to draw attention to your business the way Aytakin Tank has with his startup, JotForm. He writes articles that are well-researched and relate back to key themes that his customer base is interested in.

3. Get a book deal

I first heard about writers getting book deals from social media through the Quora Platform. Writers on Quora, who had built up big audiences, were getting offered book deals to expand on their most popular posts. The bestselling book called "12 Rules For Life" by Jordan Peterson is an example of a response to a question on Quora that ended up becoming a book.

4. Collect email subscribers

You can use Medium to build up email subscribers. This is a choice many writers make because they want to own the relationship with their followers, and be able to contact them directly to have a conversation and perhaps sell a product or service once in a while.

5. Be featured in major publications for exposure

If your work gets traction on Medium, major publications will be watching. The Washington Post, Forbes, CNBC, and Business Insider all found me through Medium and offered to share my work with a larger audience without me having to do much.

For some writers, this is the exact traction they need to finalize their book proposal or have enough credibility to launch a side-project.

6. To further your career

This is the least obvious strategy for Medium. If you are a career person through and through, you can create a Medium account with your real name and 9–5 job title in your bio. Then you can publish stories about work-related topics that your customers, colleagues, leaders and competitors will see.

Once you post enough content, you'll be seen as a thought leader within your niche. This is a tactic you can exploit when looking for a new career, writing your resume, creating your LinkedIn profile, or pitching yourself in a job interview. I have used this strategy on both LinkedIn and Medium and it has helped me double my annual 9–5 salary multiple times outside of the income I make from my side-hustle of writing.

It's worth mentioning at this point that you can combine a few of these outcomes. My main focus on Medium has been to grow my audience and that strategy has been supplemented with gaining a few extra email subscribers, getting closer to a book deal in the future, being featured in a few major publications off Medium, and furthering my 9–5 career in technology. I haven't used Medium to promote a business or focus on money.

Pick one outcome as your main focus and then add in others to compliment your primary outcome to form your own unique approach.

Chapter 3—Look at the Pros

A lot of what you can learn about Medium can be seen by following the pros on the platform. Here are a few writers to follow and their core strengths to study:

- Shannon Ashley for her vulnerability and eye-catching headlines
- Tom Kuegler for his advice on blogging
- Michael Thompson for his approach to writing in a professional way that attracts big-name publications and regular book offers
- Ryan Holiday who is someone that made it big with publishing traditional books and then took the reverse approach and joined Medium to expand his reach and audience for future books
- Ali Mese for his consistently high-performing posts that read well and have a clear format
- Shaunta Grimes for her real-world experience with literature
- Darius Faroux for his short posts that are simple and attract a large following
- James Altucher for his short, sharp sentences and limited punctuation
- John Gorman for his personal essays and use of language that will inspire you
- Kris Gage for her bold stories and use of metaphors
- Jessica Wildfire for her sassiness
- Niklas Goke for the thoughts he provokes
- Sean Kernan who came from Quora and joined Medium, and his journey with both platforms which you can read about

One way to think of Medium is as a *Minimum Viable Product* for your future blog. It's a platform that lets you publish while you're still learning and doesn't require you to be a professional to get started. Spend time learning and writing on Medium by allocating a few hours a week to study a few of the writers mentioned above.

Viral talk

While you're studying the pros, I strongly urge you to ignore the “going viral” nonsense and the level of engagement each post has. I have never been able to predict any of my own stories that have gone viral and that's the meaning of the word in the first place.

There are many random factors that can determine if a story goes viral—time of day, engagement in the first hour, headline, picture, topic—and the combination of all these factors results in the engagement you see, which is impossible to properly analyze and dissect.

Forget going viral and concentrate on publishing consistently.

Chapter 4—What You’ll Need to Get Started

Before we get into it, I want you to know that I’m *not* going to treat you like a baby in a diaper with a blue blanket and tell you annoying stuff—such as how to create a profile on Medium, how to post images, where to place the headline, etc. These features of Medium are straightforward and intuitive (the brilliance of the platform) and if you get stuck, Medium’s FAQs with screenshots are far better than anything I could put together. So from here on, I’ll assume you’ve used the internet at least once in your life and can create an account and find the big green publish button.

Okay that was a lot of preamble but it was necessary to set the scene and make sure you understand the basics and the motivations behind everybody on the platform. Now comes the chunky meat patty inside the hamburger—this is the real practical stuff to get started.

A device to write on

You’ll need a device to write on. You can choose between a desktop, laptop, tablet, or mobile phone. My choice is an iMac because it forces me to sit in my quiet home office and block out distractions with the door closed.

If your time is limited, a laptop or tablet could be a good choice to write on while you’re on your way to work or out and about. Select your device and install the Medium App to take full advantage of the platform.

A Medium Membership

You’ll also need a Medium Membership. There are two types of stories on Medium: stories behind the paywall for members only known as *The Medium Partner Program*, and free stories that are not behind the paywall. Because Medium is a business, they give very little attention or reach to writers who don’t publish articles behind the paywall.

If you don’t have a membership then you can’t read more than three stories a month that are behind the paywall, and that is going to make it hard to follow the pros and watch what they do. Besides it’s rude if you expect to be paid as a writer but won’t pay \$5 USD per month to buy a membership and support other writers. Buy the membership and see it as an investment in your learning as a writer.

An email folder to store story ideas

Part of being a writer involves collecting ideas that you can write about. Create a new folder in your favorite email program like Gmail and call it “Medium Story Ideas.” Every time you have an idea for a topic to write about, write the headline of the story and any quick dot points in an email, and send it to yourself.

When the day comes to write, look through your email folder of ideas and write about ones that grab your attention. If an idea sits in your email folder for more than ninety days, consider deleting it. (Hot Tip: the best time to write about an idea is when you think of it. It’s when you’re the most excited by it and often that energy fades the longer you leave it.)

Grammar and spell checking software

Microsoft Office and others are not strong enough to check your work for errors. In order to write the quality of writing required to succeed on Medium, you'll need editing software that's a bit more sophisticated. I personally use Grammarly and it costs just over one-hundred bucks a year—it's worth every dollar.

Flow States

A big part of being a writer is doing the actual writing and don't fool yourself—it's bloody hard to do at times even for me! The quickest way to overcome the resistance to get started is to utilize flow states. You've certainly experienced the feeling before. It's when you are doing an activity and everything seems to flow. How do you know? Because time passes faster than normal where six hours can feel like thirty-minutes. There is a lot of research on the topic and you can put yourself into a flow state by using three tools:

1. **Headphones**—to block out distractions by playing music (movie soundtracks and music without words seem to work best).
2. **Coffee**—to get your energy levels up and get your mind ticking away.
3. **A warm shower**—one of the times we are most relaxed is whilst in the shower and those states can lead to creativity, followed by flow states.

Bonus tip: Write ideas that come to mind in the shower on the wall of your shower using a liquid chalk pen you can rub off when you're done. Once the idea is out of your head and written down, you can keep having more ideas and not have to worry about remembering them.

Productivity tools

There is a lot to keep track of as a writer and you'll need some tools to help keep you productive. It has taken me five years to find the right ones, so here we go:

- **Trello**—This is an app that has seriously changed my life and it's more than a to-do list. The app breaks down any task in three stages: Things to do (not started), In Progress (Doing but not finished), and Done. All you do is add all the tasks required to publish on Medium for the week and keep track of them. Once a task ends up in the "Done" list it can be recycled again when it's required next time. I track story creation, research, submission to publications, photo sourcing, books to read, editing and social media posts, all using the tool. The best part is it's visual and can be synced across all your devices. So you could start working on your to-do list from your phone on the bus ride home from work and then finish it off when you get home from your desktop.
- **OneTab**—This is the solution to having a million tabs open as a writer. When you are doing research for a story or reading other writer's work, you're going to have a lot of tabs open. OneTab lets you put all your tabs into one convenient tab and sort them for later retrieval while experiencing the magic of having one window with only one tab open.

- **New Tab Draft**—This is another simple tool for your Internet browser that allows you to use a new tab as a minimalist notepad to scribble on in-between writing and coming up with new ideas. I use it to store my to-do list on for priorities outside of writing like public speaking and my 9–5 work.
- **Notes App**—The speed at which you can write down an idea is crucial. Emailing notes to yourself is great and worth doing, but having a notepad in your phone that is faster can be the difference between an awesome idea and one you forgot. All my notes start out life in the Apple Notes App and then become emails that go into my ideas folder. I have tried other note-taking apps and found them either too complicated, expensive, or worst of all, not able to sync quickly and easily across multiple devices. My notes app syncs across my phone, laptop, tablet, and desktop so I’m always close to ideas that can become stories that might just change the world.

A call to action

This is one sentence that you place at the bottom of every article you post that allows the reader to do one thing you ask of them. Typical CTA’s ask readers to follow, or subscribe to an email list, or buy a book. You need to decide on your CTA at the start, before you publish.

Medium is very particular about these and if you break their rules, your work will be seen by no one. A simple, non-intrusive CTA like “Join my email list” or “Stay in touch” is all you should consider. Many publications on Medium and outside the platform do not allow these, so see them as a privilege and don’t abuse them.

A link in your bio

By having a Medium profile you will be given space to write a few sentences about yourself. The key to your bio is to insert a link to something you care about. It could be a link to your website, business, Instagram account, or latest book. I’d also suggest putting your email address in your bio to make it dead simple for readers to contact you. Having my email address visible has allowed major publications and large corporations who want to hire me, be able to make contact and present me with opportunities. Add a link in your bio.

A profile picture

Do not skip this step. Add a photo of yourself so people can see who they are reading and know you’re real.

We tend to read humans we can relate to and the human face is key to making that valuable connection with you. Would you go on a date with someone you found on a dating app who didn’t have a picture? Of course not—they could be Jack The Ripper for all you know, ready to tear your face off and make sausages with it. (Avoid illustrations or cartoons of yourself too.)

A second social media platform

Never put all your eggs in one basket as a writer; otherwise you'll end up being taken advantage of. Ev and the team at Medium are lovely people and even with the best of intention, they could disappear tomorrow. Choose a second social media platform that you can build up and share your Medium stories on. My choice is LinkedIn and I cross-post and take top highlights from my Medium stories and share them with my followers on LinkedIn.

A landing page

Not everyone can call themselves a tech nerd—I get it. There are also many bad descriptions of what a landing page is. Let me break it down for you: a landing page is a single page on the web with an address that has only one button you click. It's a distraction-free page that only produces one result and that increases the conversation rate of the desired action. For example, my landing page only has one button on it and that is to join my email list so we can stay in touch and be pals.

A landing page is great if you are not ready for a full-blown website but would still like to collect email subscribers for future use (and you should).

An email provider

To be able to collect emails and send emails to anyone who subscribes, you'll need an email provider. My original email provider was MailChimp until they banned me for life and wouldn't tell me why. I learned through this experience that you need to read the terms and conditions carefully of any company that handles your email list. Many of them have forbidden topics that you are not allowed to talk about in your emails and you'd never know unless you read the fine print written in size six font.

I ended up choosing ConvertKit, which is also used by Tim Ferriss and has a high delivery rate—meaning your email will be less likely to end up in the trash or spam folder of your readers. Find one that works for you and start out on a free plan until you have enough subscribers to shop around.

Nice-to haves

- **A stand up desk**—to alternate between sitting and standing allowing you to write for longer periods of time
- **A website**—the whole point of Medium is that as a blogger, you don't need a website. I've been at this writing game for a long time and found that as your career progresses, it's worth having a website. I use Wordpress for my website and have my site hosted by a local Australian Hosting company called VentrIP (choose a hosting provider that is close to where you live and has local support).
- **A payment gateway**—At some point you may want to sell something on your website and having a way for people to pay you is important. I use Stripe because of their connection with Medium, and PayPal because of the number of account holders they have globally and their ease of use.
- **An email address with your domain**—tim@timdenning.net (.com was taken) sounds much more professional and legit than a domain that ends in Gmail or Outlook.

What you WON'T need

The last thing on the planet you will need to write on Medium is a ridiculous personal brand. Hear me loud and clear: nobody cares who you are or what your brand is. All anybody cares about is how you can be helpful. They want to be inspired, taught, shown, entertained, and made to laugh.

The moment you fall for the personal brand nonsense being peddled on the internet, you become obsessed with yourself and your own self-worth while taking endless selfies of you leaning on sports cars you don't own outside mansions that belong to Hollywood celebrities you've never met and who wouldn't recognize you at a cocktail party.

Medium is not about you; it's about the readers and *their* hopes and dreams.

Chapter 5—Finding an audience

Before you start writing on Medium, you need to know how people find your work and how to build an audience. Here are the ways your work is found on Medium:

1. Medium curation

There is a team of editors that work for Medium and review every story submitted behind the paywall. In really simple terms, if these editors think your story should be seen by more people, they will curate it. This means that your story will be added to the Medium list of topics and you'll get an email confirming this has happened. Without being curated consistently on Medium, your work will be seen by a lot less people.

Being curated requires your work to meet the following criteria:

- Be of quality
- Have all images used in your story credited properly
- Have non-click-bait headlines (like Change Your Life In One Minute Guaranteed!)
- Use sentence case in the headline
- Not be a piece that is clearly content marketing designed to sell
- Be typically non-fiction rather than fiction/poetry
- Not be a piece you have published before on Medium

Many people do not understand the curation process and that is why they fail on Medium. If your story is behind the paywall and 50% or more of your stories are being curated, you're going to crush it. Unfortunately there is a huge downside if you ignore the requirements to be curated: your work will stop being reviewed by Medium Editors and you won't be able to ever get curated. The only option when this happens is to start a new account.

Don't let this faze you, though. I'm a pretty average writer and most of my work gets curated. One way to increase your chances is to add in links that back up your story or contain statistics (unless it's an entirely personal story, which still does well on Medium too).

You can, of course, ignore Medium curation altogether and never be curated and treat Medium like your own personal blog. Personally, I think that if this is your approach, you'd be better off not writing on Medium at all. The point of Medium is to gain access to the platform's massive audience.

2. Followers

Every story you publish is seen by people who follow you (although probably not everybody). This is another way your work is seen and it's part of the value in having followers. People will follow you as you start to write on Medium and show up for long enough for them to believe you're serious.

3. Bring your own audience

You can supplement the audience Medium gives you access to by bringing your own. While I haven't seen anyone do well on the platform by bringing 100% of their own traffic, I have seen the power of boosting your numbers with audiences you have elsewhere.

Every week my list of tens of thousands of subscribers gets an email from me with my most popular Medium story for that week. Within an hour I see a huge spike in traffic on that story that gives it a boost and has even helped some of my stories make it on the competitive homepage of Medium.

4. Publications not owned by Medium

Any man/woman and their dog can create a Medium publication. I write for publications not owned by Medium such as PS.I Love You, Better Marketing, and The Startup. These Publications have existing followers that help my work get seen by more people.

The only real difference between a personal account and a publication account is that a publication can contact their subscribers. Publications can also attract their own followers separate from your own, hence making them valuable.

5. Medium owned publications

These are the big dogs on the platform. Publications such as Forge, OneZero, Marker and Human Parts are owned by Medium directly and receive a few advantages:

- More reach on the platform
- Features in emails Medium sends to its users
- A designated editing team that clean up your work and make it shine
- Custom illustrations they can commission if they choose

It took me a long time to get into one of the publications owned by Medium called Forge and it wasn't easy. If you're highly ambitious, there is nothing stopping you from pitching them once you have a few stories on your account. The key is to research the types of stories each publication publishes, write a short email that does nothing more than provide a link to your draft story, and consistently pitch them every few weeks.

All these publications care about is high-quality stories, so if you can write one like that, you can gain access to the perks they offer.

6. Popular List

If a story you write gains lots of traction, it will appear on the popular list featured on Medium's site and sidebar. There is no easy way to make it into this list but if you do, you'll likely make thousands of dollars from the story.

7. Editor's Pick

These are stories that appear in the newsfeed of readers and are given a slight boost (not much) from being referred to as Editor's Picks.

8. Homepage exposure

The homepage has changed many times over the years and Medium previously made a bad decision to only feature stories that came from publications they owned. Thankfully this changed and potentially any story can make it onto a reader's homepage.

Each user sees a different set of stories on their homepage and if your story features on enough people's homepages, you'll reach a larger audience as a result.

9. Tags and search

Each story can be tagged with up to five tags. These are essentially keywords that highlight what your story is about and are separate from the categories that Medium Editors can put your story in if it's curated.

Tagging your stories correctly helps them be found by readers who utilize the search function. For example if a reader searches for a keyword such as "Red Balloon" and you're the only one that used that keyword as a tag, then you'll show up first. You can either use popular tags like *Life* or *Business* or you can go for obscure ones. I'd recommend choosing four tags that are popular and one that is unpopular.

The more you write with the same tags, the more you have a chance to gain top writer status in that tag and have that mentioned on your profile page. It's no big deal but does help readers know what topics you know about.

10. Sharing your stories on social media

This is a misunderstood idea, so let me elaborate. If you cut and paste links to your Medium stories and place them on other social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram, they'll be seen by no one. (You can A/B test this for yourself.)

Let's think about this logically: if I'm Mark Zuckerberg (founder of Facebook) would I want you putting links to your Medium stories on my platform and having users click those links and be taken off Facebook? Of course not. Every time you post a link directly to Medium, the platform you do it on will show your post to less than 2% of your followers. Basically, you're wasting your time with this strategy.

What you want to do is aim for native content. What does this mean for normal people like you and me that didn't study rocket science? You copy and paste the words of your Medium story onto a platform like LinkedIn and publish it as a brand new article. You then link back to the original Medium article at the bottom. You can also be sneaky and place a link to your Medium article in the comments section of your LinkedIn post too.

Another strategy I use is to copy and paste the top highlighted sentence in each article from readers on Medium and turn them into quotes for other platforms. I then say "read more" in the comments section and link to the Medium article. You have to be smart when promoting your Medium stories on social media because it can go against the revenue models and hip pockets of the giants like Facebook who sell your attention to advertisers.

The way you find an audience for your stories comes back to which outcome you selected back in chapter two. Playing by Medium's rules in order to access their audience is the best strategy I've come across. One other tip I'll give you is never import stories into Medium using the import tool. Medium editors seem to ignore stories published through this method. Further, it's not a smooth process that works 100% of the time.

The first place you decide to publish a story is up to you. You can first publish a story on your own blog or on a publication outside of Medium like Forbes and then copy and paste the text for use on Medium whenever you like to get the SEO benefit yourself rather than give it to Medium. My strategy is to always publish on Medium first and then after one week, to publish the occasional story elsewhere if it's contextual to the platform.

For example, if I'm taking an article off Medium and sharing it on LinkedIn, I need to add in a career/work/business flavor to it. Otherwise, people on LinkedIn are less likely to engage with it. If I'm taking the same post and putting it on Instagram, then I need to make it more visually appealing given the photographic nature of the platform. Blindly sharing content from one platform to the next without thinking about the contextual detail of the social media platform won't help you.

Medium's voice as a social media platform

The writing voice of Medium is very different. People that read stories on Medium love longer-form content (an average of a 7-minute read is ideal) and are looking for more in-depth insight. The audience is smart, tech-savvy, diverse (in culture, religion and beliefs), contains more millennials than other platforms, and hungry to hear from both experts and amateurs.

You can be witty, funny, intelligent, empathetic or motivational and you'll find an audience on the platform. It's a smaller community than other platforms and has a touch more American content than you might be used to.

The best voice I found for Medium is to be helpful and empathetic with what you write. This seems to be appreciated and to gain the most claps, which makes sense given our human nature.

Chapter 6—The Writing Process on Medium

It's now time to look at the writing process and how to pump out high-quality stories that people will love, and have the power to earn you a living. This writing process I'm about to share with you has been refined many times and has taken five years for me to master. You can start with this process and adapt it as you need to.

Step One: Finding topics to write about

The first part of the process is having a topic to write about. Many writers find this area of writing difficult and I've come up with some easy ways that will get you writing in no time.

- **Answer Quora.com questions on Medium**—Quora is a platform to ask questions and you can quickly see the burning questions people have on any topic. Find a question that you resonate with and know a thing or two about and answer it as a Medium story. Pretend you are talking directly to the person that asked the question for maximum effect.
- **Write about thoughts that you can't stop thinking about**—If you're upset, angry, or inspired by something, that's normally an excellent topic to write about. When I'm angry about a personal situation, rather than be pissed off and think about it, I write it down and turn it into a Medium story that can help others. The best way to get stuff off your chest is to write about it, feel better, and perhaps make a few dollars off it.
- **Rebut other stories**—I read stories all the time that I don't agree with. Rather than write a comment on the story, another strategy is to write a rebuttal and even mention the original story.
- **Do book reviews**—Want to know a secret? Some of my most shared stories ever are nothing more than book reviews. To make them a little more interesting, I add a bit of my own experience and they go down a treat. Take the top lessons of the next book you read and turn it into a story for Medium and add 1–2 stories of your own to the piece.
- **Do movie reviews**—Pretty much every documentary I watch involves me sitting down with the Notes App open and writing down key lessons or ideas. Many of these short notes become stories later and people like those too.
- **Curate other people's ideas**—There's this false idea that when you write a story, it has to feature brand new or unique thinking. It doesn't. Your experience and the stories you tell are enough. There are entire businesses, websites, publications, and writers who do nothing more than curate other people's content. You can take an idea from Richard Branson and turn it into a story and do very well. A big part of writing is curating. Don't take it for granted and carefully select every person, idea, book, movie and business you mention.
- **Product Reviews**—Writing about a new piece of tech on Medium does well too. Find a product/service you love and go deep on it.

Bonus tip: The best writing ideas come from actually living life and going outside.

Be a journalist

This is probably some of the most important advice in the whole book.

Medium is grown up now and the number one thing they are looking for is a bit of journalism. You don't need to be Barbara Walters or anything but doing research, interviewing people, and adding in links that back up what you are saying will see your stories be given an artificial boost from Medium.

In some ways the publishing industry has been radically changed by Medium and in other ways, not much has changed. So when choosing topics, choose a few that allow you to exploit this tactic of acting like a journalist when you can.

Cover more than one topic

If you only write about one topic, you'll get bored. I started with writing about entrepreneurship and personal development and have since dabbled with topics such as relationships, social media, writing, psychology, leadership and productivity.

You'll be surprised how some topics are easy to write about, and others are difficult, even if you are passionate about the subject. Experiment with a few.

Test topics as comments or social media posts

One trick I use all the time is to test topics as social media posts or to leave a comment on the post of a person who has a big audience and see if people resonate with it based on the number of likes/replies that occur. It takes a few minutes to do and can be the difference between a poor choice of topic and one that has social proof.

Step Two: Build the habit

Now that you know what topics you are going to write about, it's time to do the writing. How often and how frequently you write will determine a lot of your results. It's the single biggest differentiator between a six-figure writer and one that is making \$1.50 a month and blaming family, life, Medium, other writers, etc.

Set a schedule

Rather than wait to feel like writing, remove your willpower from the equation and build a writing habit. My schedule is as follows:

Writing long-form stories and short social media posts between 9 am-5 pm on Thursdays and Saturdays (research happens as I write).

Editing, uploading, and submitting stories to publications on Mondays and Tuesdays between 7 pm-9 pm.

Sourcing photos between 7 am-11 am on Sundays.

Task-switching is one way to mess up your writing. It's best to batch similar tasks together and do them altogether than it is to say write and edit on the same day. The different levels of energy and creative thinking you need for each task are varied. Finding photos, as an example, is very different to typing words that inspire.

Race your way to 100 articles

Before you get too bogged down in trying to be the best writer and learning every trick the internet can give you in 90-seconds, write one hundred articles without stopping and publish them as you go.

It will give you a back catalog that not only helps you build a tremendously powerful writing habit, but also gives you credibility with readers and shows publications that you're serious. No one is going to take you as seriously if you have published one story and been on the platform for three weeks.

I started with racing my way to one hundred articles and now have thousands of stories published on the internet with more than half of them featured on Medium and earning money. I'm not special and used this one habit-building technique to get serious. You can copy the same formula.

Step Three: Add your unique voice

Go back over your story and see if you can read your unique voice in the piece. If it's there, congrats! If not, add in your unique voice.

Your "voice" is a bit of an ambiguous concept that is simply just you adding in phrases you made up, words you invented, plays on grammar you use, and most of all, a bit of personality.

One of the most successful articles I have ever published on Medium was *How I Made \$11,000 from Writing in 30 Days*. Many other writers copied the exact same headline trying to duplicate my success and got nowhere. It made no sense until a friend of mine pointed out that the article went viral not because of the headline, but because of the personality I added in and my unique voice. He said, "People fell in love with the way you said it, not what you said."

This moment was a huge realization for me. People are buying, more than anything, your view of the world and how you say it. These are some examples of what I use:

- Brudda
- Wanna
- Getcha
- G'day mate
- Timbo Jones
- How the bloody hell are ya?
- Dudes in black suits
- “Aussie Blogger” instead of writer/blogger
- Dollars to pay the power bill and drink a 4 AM green smoothie (making fun of myself)

People may copy your ideas but they can't copy your voice and your uniqueness. Never forget that because that's what readers fall in love with.

Step Four: Leave the reader with a takeaway

Go over your story once again and ensure there is a takeaway for the reader. This is one step many writers leave out and it's the reason readers switch off. No one is reading your work if it reads like a journal entry.

The difference is adding a takeaway. It's cool to write a personal essay, just make sure in the last paragraph, you leave the reader with a takeaway and make it stupidly obvious and simple (even use the heading 'takeaway' if you want). An example would be telling the story of your mother who passed away and her talking about her life. In the last paragraph you could say: “My mother always taught me to pick up the washing and keep a tidy home. Maybe that's an idea you could try yourself.”

That last sentence is crucial. Give the takeaway and then talk directly to the reader by offering a thought or an action item. This is how you make your story useful.

Step Five: Ruthlessly edit

You can keep editing your story all day long and never end up hitting publish. Please don't do this. Hitting publish is more important than trying to be perfect, and quality is subjective anyway—what you think is amazing could be total nonsense to the masses, remember that.

When your story feels almost there, it's time to do an edit. The process involves reading your story from start to finish twice and correcting any obvious errors or sentences that don't make sense. There is also a temptation to add more and if that feeling is overwhelming, add an extra sentence or paragraph where you see fit. Then, call it finished from a writing perspective and paste the text into a tool like Grammarly to ensure that any errors you have missed are picked up.

Remember that these tools are only a guide and the errors they pick up are actually just suggestions, which can often be wrong. You're smarter than the editing tools, so only accept changes you agree with.

Editing group chats

You can go the extra mile and join an editing group chat. They are typically hosted in messenger apps like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and Telegram. It's where a group of writers read each other's work by sharing Medium Draft Links in the chat window and leaving notes on each other's story inside the Medium platform.

I'm not in one of these group chats myself but have been asked to join a few. If there is a story that I have written which is particularly important, I'll reach out to 1–3 writers to do a proof-read for me. (This eBook, for example, was edited that way.)

Step Six: Check your writing for simplicity

One of the best bits of feedback I ever got was from an overseas writer based in Asia. She said to me “Tim, English is not my first language and you're the only writer I read because you use plain English I can actually understand.”

Because of my understanding of English, I can't explain things using fancy sentences and show-stopping metaphors. This seemed like a disadvantage at the start until it became apparent that it was a strength. Keeping your work simple allows you to attract more readers.

Darius Foroux does this really well on Medium by sharing ideas that are simple and breaking them down. He uses plain English and short sentences. Read over your writing after you edit it and ask yourself: “Is this story too complicated?” If so, go back and make it simpler or rewrite it if you have to. Too many writers try way too hard to be impressive with their understanding of the English Language and it scares away readers. Don't be one of those writers.

Writing is not a competition that is won through complexity; it's won by helping your readers and going beyond yourself through vulnerability and bravery.

Step Seven: Format like a minimalist

There are endless schools of thought when it comes to formatting. Most people overdo formatting thinking it's making their work better, when it is in fact making it worse. Less is more when it comes to formatting.

On Medium, the platform has lots of beautiful white space and you want to make that shine. Medium is a minimalist platform in its design and so your stories should match that theme. Here are some tips:

- Always add a subtitle (it helps with getting curated)
- Break up text with page breaks and subheadings
- Add lists where it makes sense
- Place no more than two external links in your article
- Use *Shift + Enter* on your keyboard to create a series of sentences that are semi-related and have no space between each one—after every short sentence, you go to a new line(great for questions)
- Use quotes sparingly

- Use the correct quote types—one type is for pulling chunks of text or passages from a book, and the other is for traditional quotes from people
- When quoting yourself, don't put your name after the quote
- Think carefully about adding diagrams or embedding videos, as Medium is a platform focused on the written word, not media

Bonus tip: you can replace formatting text into quotes with standalone sentences that sit outside paragraphs by themselves. Every time you make a sentence or paragraph into a formatted quote, you are choosing what the reader should admire or pay attention to—and frankly, that is not a decision you have the right to make.

Another subtle way to bring attention to a sentence is by being the first to highlight a sentence using the highlight tool when your story is published. Every sentence you highlight can be seen by your followers and helps them decide if they want to highlight the same sentence.

Highlights or sentences that are left to stand on their own are subtler ways to draw attention to an idea rather than format sentences into huge, overused block quotes, as though everything you say is brilliant and quotable.

Change things up

When you find your ideal formula for formatting, change things up. I do this all the time and play around with different formatting. If everything you do looks the same, readers can get bored—or worse, you can get bored. Writing is about exploring your creative side and you can do that with formatting, just don't overdo it.

Formatting for different devices

I tried to read an article on an old-school website called Esquire once and it was nearly impossible. There were like fifty-sentence paragraphs that were hard to read, even on a 27-inch desktop computer screen.

You need to be comfortable with starting a new paragraph even when it's not technically correct. In fact, you need to almost forget about the rules of paragraphs. Why? The not-so-smart-phone has ruined the idea of the traditional paragraph. The average phone screen is small and the latest stats show that more than 50% of internet users are reading your content via their phone.

If you write huge walls of text, people will click away even if what you have to say is more profound than Stephen King's theories on the cosmos.

Different stories require different formatting. Personal essays tend to lend themselves to fewer paragraphs than say how-to advice. With essays and research-backed/journalist type articles, I keep paragraphs to no more than ten sentences. For how-to advice and short stories I tend to do a paragraph every 3–4 sentences.

3–4 sentence paragraphs on a desktop or laptop screen are like 8-sentence behemoths on a mobile screen, so that is well and truly long enough for the average reader.

Think carefully about every part of the reader's experience

I think about readers the same way I think about the customers of a business. The dark art of UX (User Experience) has taken over the software industry and it applies to writing too.

Everything a customer does is supposed to be thought through, designed and ideally gives them an awesome experience that makes them want to refer new customers. RX (Readers Experience) is similar and focuses on every touchpoint a reader has with your work and what their hopes and dreams might be.

What's the reader's goal?

How might the reader feel?

What does the reader want to know?

Which reader persona do they fit?

These are questions I think about all the time in order to deliver the best possible reader experience. To make the process even easier, I have divided each of my readers into a different persona. These are the personas of my readers that will help you define your own:

- A reader that wants to be a writer
- A reader that's having career challenges
- A reader that wants to change or improve their life
- A reader who wants to use social media as a tool for something bigger

Then I think about what upsets readers and how to avoid some, or all the pitfalls. Here's what upsets readers:

- Endless self-promotion
- Selfies
- Undisclosed hidden sells via affiliate links
- Long call-to-actions
- Asks of a reader that sound like begging
- Too much humblebragging
- Hard to understand stories
- Cryptic, secret handshake headlines
- Acronyms that require Google to decipher
- University Doctorate talk that makes typical readers feel dumb
- Writing that talks down to the reader and makes them feel terrible

As you can see the process of understanding a reader's experience is more in-depth than you might have thought. Getting into your reader's hearts and minds is useful if you want to be useful. (The dead easy way to be useful to a reader is to leave them with one takeaway at the end of every story.)

Format your work so it creates a great reader experience and you'll be on your way to making an income from your writing in no time at all and having people share your work for reasons they can't even explain.

Step Eight: Add a scroll-stopping feature image

The feature image of your story is the picture that sits below the headline and subtitle. Most of the time, this should be the only image in your story. I am meticulous when it comes to selecting images. My aim is to inspire the reader with a headline and then an image that allows them to dream for a bit about what might be possible.

An image can be sooooo powerful. The process I use is to scroll through sites like Unsplash, Google Images, Flickr, Pexels, Pixabay and Getty Images to find scroll-stopping photos. One way I do this is by scrolling rather quickly through images to find one that makes me stop—almost always, the image that stands out from the crowd without me having time to look at it in any detail is the image I end up using.

Choose your feature image carefully and remember to give credit to the person who created it; otherwise Medium won't curate your story and may even take it down.

Images in the body of the text

At the same time as adding a feature image, you can also choose to add images in the body of the text. I use to do this all the time and stopped for a few reasons. One: when I took stories from Medium and pasted them to other platforms like LinkedIn, the images didn't copy and they had to be re-inserted which was a huge pain in the butthole.

Two: having images in the text can accidentally appear like ads or look sales/spammy to a reader. They can also distract the hell out of a reader and subtract from the words you would like them to read. If it makes sense, add an image. If you have no reason for adding an image then it is probably best to leave it out.

Avoid stock image fatigue

Have you ever seen two cheesy, young white dudes in a black suit shaking hands with smiles that you know were done for camera and cringed? Of course you have. These images are the bread and butter of stock image libraries and they are *so* ten years ago. Images that look overly stock detract from your story. If you want to stand out from the crowd, find images that look less cheesy and are genuine. (Check out John P. Weiss and Darius Foroux for examples.)

Taking your own photographs

One way you can describe what you're talking about to a reader is to take a photo of it with your phone. Again, don't overdo it. The occasional image taken by you makes your stories a touch more personal and that brings you closer to a reader in the long-term.

Step Nine: Schedule your article to go live

Your story is written, edited, formatted, has at least one image and is ready for publishing. This is a step people mess up without realizing it. You want to publish your story at a time when readers are most likely online. A definite day to avoid is Sunday when people are away from the internet. A few handy Medium Writers have done some A/B testing and found that Tuesdays and Saturdays (San Francisco time) are best for publishing stories.

While there are no hard and fast rules, I can definitely relate to these suggested time slots. You have to remember that Medium is a San Francisco based company and there are lots of readers on the platform that are in America. Just hitting publish on your story is lazy. You're best to utilize the "Schedule Later" button to have it go live at a good time and allow your stories to come out in intervals.

Stories tend to build up momentum in the first twenty-four hours. Having said that, stories can take a lot longer to build up views than that for reasons no one knows. Your back catalog can also have moments of resurgence. (A fellow writer recently shared one of my stories from a few years ago and caused a whole bunch of new traffic to flock to it, as an example.) The last thing you want to do is publish a whole batch of stories all at once. Spread your stories out and aim for 1–2 to be published each day.

This brings me to the topic of how many stories and how often. There is no magic solution here because everyone is different and has different levels of available time. Here is what I'd recommend: aim to publish at a minimum, one story per week (every week) of at least one-thousand words or more. If you do this, you'll do well in the long run. Now for every extra story you publish per week, the momentum you build grows and it's worth considering if you are serious about writing.

Some writers go the opposite way: they publish too often. If you publish ten stories a day, readers are going to think you are either Superman (unlikely) or not legit. If Medium sees you publish too many stories, they too may think you're spamming (no thank you ma'am!) and will take secret action accordingly by not curating your posts. As a rule of thumb, I'd say the maximum you should post is ten stories per week. Choose what works for you and publish a minimum of one story per week, even over the holiday periods.

Step Ten: Interact with readers

Your story is out there in the world ready to be seen and enjoyed by anyone who comes across it. Now comes the opportunity to interact with readers. This happens in two ways: by replying to emails from readers and through the comments readers leave you directly on your stories.

By replying to readers, you build a stronger relationship with them. But be warned, it can take a lot of time. This is an optional step that is polite and will help you increase your results by no more than 5%. If you are struggling for time you can choose not to reply or only reply when you can. You don't need to respond to every reader even though many self-proclaimed influencers say you must. We're humans with lives and families and not all of us want to be responding to everybody.

Dealing with trolls

You are going to get haters and trolls on Medium like any other social media platform. Often, it has nothing to do with you and the reader is just having a bad day or dealing with some really challenging life situation.

If you get nasty comments you can either ignore them, or show the crowd the sort of person you are by *liking* their comment and saying, “Thank you!” or “It’s cool that you didn’t dig and thanks for sharing your thoughts!”. 95% or more of readers will leave you positive or encouraging comments, so don’t let the small few beat you down and rob you of the motivation to continue.

The traits as a writer to work on

When you’re interacting with readers, there are a few traits you want to demonstrate as often as you can and even cultivate. Almost every successful writer, including the Medium writers that make six-figures, demonstrate the following traits.

- **Be nice**—treat readers the way you’d like to be treated. And if you have nothing nice to say....well you know the rest.
- **Be humble**—no one likes a show-off or someone who thinks that everything they do is amazing. Be gracious in your approach and understand that you started from nothing, just like some of your readers might be beginning their journey from scratch.
- **Be empathetic**—goes without saying.
- **Be curious**—when a reader reaches out to you, don’t dismiss them too easily. Some of my best business clients and friends have come about by being curious and having conversations. Many people you meet through your writing can help you later on and they won’t always come out and reveal their value first off. The team behind Tony Robbins (one of my biggest idols) reached out to me on LinkedIn and if I’d been a knob, I would never have got the chance to talk with them and work with them.

The comment strategy

Put comments on other writer’s posts every day and do so without expecting anything in return. More comments means more visibility for your profile and writers/readers will reciprocate by leaving comments on your stories. Again, this is a tip that is only worth doing if you have the time and is not a must.

Watch the interaction from readers

As we discussed earlier, readers can highlight sentences or passages on Medium and they’ll appear with a green colored highlight over them to you when logged in. (All readers on the platform can see the toplight of every story only.)

After many years of looking at the top highlights on my stories and the stories written by hundreds of writers, here’s what I learned: short, clean sentences become top highlights, not long passages of text or sentences that contain complex vocabulary. Your readers can teach you a lot based on how they react. Pay careful attention.

Chapter 7—Making Money on Medium

The illusion of making money on Medium is that your work needs mass appeal or to be of ridiculously high quality. This is untrue.

The single biggest way to make money on Medium is by doing the necessary work. It's the sheer effort you put into writing stories as often as you can that will determine what monetary value you derive from Medium.

As cliché as it sounds, there is no way to avoid doing the work or to outsource the work to somebody else. Only you can tell your story the way it's supposed to be told and narrate it. There are too many writers I have seen who try to cheat the system and break the rules—like publishing the same article twice, or having their friends clap for their articles to boost their reach, or by cutting corners and choosing clickbait headlines.

Every way to make money on the internet requires effort and if you can accept that, you're going to make a lot of cashola. You're still early to this internet thing despite what you may think. Much of the world is yet to be connected to the internet and that is rapidly changing—increasing the size of the opportunity and the money you can make from platforms like Medium.

Okay let's get into how you make money on Medium.

1. Medium Partner Program

Medium has a program that you are automatically opted into every time you hit publish on the platform. It's called the Medium Partner Program and it works like this: every writer is paid based on how much the total reading time is on all their stories for the month, from members only.

The total amount in dollars that is collected in Medium Membership fees is then distributed out amongst the writers based on their overall reading time for the month.

In order to be paid, all you need to do is go to Medium and create a Stripe account (a financial services company part-owned by Visa and similar to PayPal) through your profile page.

Word of warning: not all countries are supported by Stripe so check the list to see if your location is. Most are and they are adding more all the time.

At the end of the month you are given a summary of your earnings and the money is paid to you via Stripe into the bank account you nominate.

You used to earn money on Medium based on how many claps (likes) your story got and then you were paid on that basis. With the switch to the reading time model that happened later on in the platform's journey, it stopped anybody who wanted to cheat the system. The platform knows when you click away from a story, leave your desk to get a coffee, or sit idle not reading a story (obviously because you stop scrolling down the page).

Claps are still helpful, though and help you make money. When readers hit the clap button, it helps your story be seen by more people, allowing you to potentially earn more through the reading time metric if your story is decent.

Now you can't cheat on Medium like you can on other platforms and rely on the vanity metric of likes and chat groups to boost your stories. You're going to have to actually have a real human read your post and that's a good thing.

Medium is distributing more of the power of the platform amongst an even greater number of writers. You could have been a Medium Writer for five minutes and yet you still have the same opportunity as the rest of us.

Medium is democratizing writing and increasing the impact of the written word. This is the real value of the way the partner program works and how you can get paid as a writer on the platform.

2. Advances from Medium Publications

Medium also owns and runs its own publications. You can either reach out to these publications directly or, if you're lucky, they may spot one of your stories and ask to feature it.

Either way, if you make it into a Medium-owned publication, you may be offered an advance outside of the typical money you can earn from the partner program. This has happened to me quite a few times and is a nice little bonus for your hard work.

3. Readers you refer to Medium that become members

You also earn dollars for people that find Medium through your work and become a member within thirty days.

Consider an author that writes about frisbee throwing as a sport. He/she finds an audience for their stories or brings them in from other sources such as their own email list. On the other hand, you might have a writer that covers many topics and is a Jack-of-all-trades who shares their readers with a variety of other writers.

The niche writer in this case will make more money on Medium with a smaller audience because their readers are more engaged with their work rather than everybody else. In other words, they are referring readers to Medium and those readers are staying there because of that writer. It makes sense that a writer would be compensated for that and the fact Medium has picked up on this is another way they are disrupting the publishing industry—and that's good for writers/bloggers.

Paying tax

All the money you earn from Medium and that goes through your Stripe account requires you to pay tax in your local country. This may seem like a burden but the truth is that if you're paying tax, you're making money.

Earning money on Medium and maximizing what you earn requires you to be smart with your tax. I'm not an accountant and can't give you tax advice, so it's worth hiring a decent accountant. They will help you claim for legitimate expenses that stem from your writing such as a laptop, software subscriptions, online courses, email lists and the costs to set up and maintain your own website/landing pages (if you choose to have them).

Chapter 8—Making Money off the Platform

You can also make money off the Medium platform thanks to the writing habit you form as a result of being a contributor on the platform. Making money off Medium seems to be a huge pain point for many writers and my email inbox is full of questions on this topic.

I have successfully made money through many avenues off Medium, so I'm going to share a few of them with you.

1. Selling an online course

Once you have a small audience, you can sell an online course that helps people go deeper in your field of expertise. This is the most basic way to make money off Medium and you can start to do so whenever you're ready.

Before going through the trouble of creating an online course, test a few course ideas with your email list—or a friend's email list—and try pre-selling your course. If you can't even get one human to buy your idea for a course based on a sales page (landing page) that talks about what a person might learn, it's probably worth pivoting to a different type of course.

If you pre-sell the course and then don't end up going through with it, don't sweat it; you can always refund a customer and tell them that you have decided not to proceed with it. I have done this once and only one person was upset.

2. Coaching 1-1

The reality is this: your writing is the gateway drug to more. Those who like, comment, and share your work may want more. Give them the option to have more if they choose to by offering coaching.

You can offer all the advice in the world through your writing, but some people will just never follow through and they know it! This is where you can be their coach and not only help them with their goal, but also be there to hold them accountable and share helpful strategies that you used when you faced the same barriers. Readers become paid clients in two ways:

- They email you directly and ask you to coach them (have your email easy for readers to find)
- They email/direct message you and ask you a question

Readers are more likely to take the human approach which is to ask for help rather than proposition you to be their coach. The second strategy is one that a writer who is not also a salesperson may struggle with. The good news is that this template will help you identify coaching clients, as opposed to readers with questions:

“Thanks for your question and happy to help.

It depends on how deep you want to go. I can send you a few links to free resources I’ve created or if you need more than that, I also have a side business that does coaching. What makes sense for you?”

3. Consulting

The word “consulting” is confusing, so let me simplify what it means in this context. Consulting is an opportunity for a business to pay you as an outside resource, not an employee, to assist them with your expertise that is highlighted through your writing on Medium.

One of the most common requests you will get for consulting is to help with writing. Why? Writing is one of the biggest pain-in-the-asses for businesses and many of them want help with it and will pay handsomely for it.

Consulting opportunities will again find their way to you via emails and direct messages and you’ll know you’ve potentially found one when the person reaching out mentions their business, or a business they work for needing help, or having questions. The use of the word “business” is a cue that you can charge for the help you are going to give.

The best way to charge for consulting is to tie the result you’re going to be charging the business for, back to a specific metric. Here are a few suggestions:

- Number of leads through the company website
- Number of articles posted per month on the company blog
- Number of leaders trained on “X”
- A decrease in company issue “Y” based on a monthly survey to those affected by the problem

You can even get creative and have a flat fee you charge for consulting plus an accelerator or percentage of revenue that you are paid based on one of these KPI’s. A friend of mine helps businesses get refunds from Facebook for bots that click ads on the platform and result in their business being incorrectly charged for. He is paid 25% of every refund as his only fee for the work. Now that’s smart.

4. Offer a membership for access to premium content

What you write on Medium can become your drawcard for more premium content. Youtube was one of the first platforms in the early 2000s that allowed everyday people to build an audience. Years later, many of the vloggers on the platform have found their way to sites such as Patreon.

These bloggers offer free videos on Youtube, sometimes with ads, and then they have links directly below each of their videos that allows a viewer to click a link and pay a monthly membership fee to access premium content. The premium content is typically divided up into three tiers: a donation tier with no added value, a tier with access to premium content on a subscription, and a raving fan tier where you get premium content plus 1–1 time with the vlogger or an item that you can’t purchase anywhere else like a signed t-shirt.

There are many platforms to help you run a premium membership for your readers; some charge a flat fee and others want a cut of your revenue. Giving readers access to premium content is a must in my opinion, especially after you've been doing it for a year. In my writing career, I started writing for free on a Wordpress blog, then shared those articles for free on LinkedIn, and then later shared premium content on Medium that could only be accessed by having a Medium Membership, as an example of what the progression looks like.

5. Affiliate links

All an affiliate link is, is recommending a product with a custom link that pays you as the original referrer. Only recommend products you have used—or in the case of books, read—yourself and can vouch for. Your audience trusts you and that means *not* abusing their trust and giving them links to products and services that they later find out are useless or even detrimental to their goals.

6. Sell an eBook

What is an eBook in simple terms? It's a book in PDF format that is not sold through a website like Amazon, and instead sold solely through your own website/landing page.

You might think eBooks are stupid and that's where you'd be wrong. A good friend of mine made US\$400K selling a simple eBook on how to set up a website.

He wasn't a web developer and the eBook was mostly content you could Google yourself. The magic with eBooks lies in your ability to curate the endless information that exists on the internet, so people don't have to, and add in your own experience and stories.

Writing an eBook about a subject you know a lot about can be lucrative. You can amplify your results by getting other people with email lists to share your eBook and paying them a small fee for doing so (this strategy works for any product/service, by the way).

7. Use your audience as a writer to find new customers for your business

If you have a business, you can use your writing to find more customers and get paid that way. Link to your business in your Medium profile or promote your business to your email list through the readers that become subscribers.

8. Speak at events

When you're an authority on a particular subject, you can pitch event organizers to speak at their events. A speaker I met through LinkedIn taught me how they got started and it's helpful. They began speaking for free about their life and the health challenges they battled at local community clubs, and then when they had enough confidence and practice, they began pitching themselves to event organizers at \$200 a gig.

As they got a few small gigs, they upped the price as they got busier. Now that same speaker, who is also a writer, gets paid \$40,000 per event—plus business class flights and accommodation for them and their family to the location of the event (typically in beautiful spots they enjoy holidaying at after the event has concluded).

I have had event organizers reach out to me and offer \$5000-\$10,000 without blinking an eye and I am still a beginner level speaker. I am attending Toastmasters to hone my craft as a storyteller. If that can happen to me, there has to be opportunities for you as well.

9. Offer a Mastermind Group

This avenue for making money sounded like a total wank fest to me. That was until a fellow blogger invited me to be a guest speaker at their monthly Mastermind Call hosted using the Zoom app.

I realized that the blogger that invited me to the call didn't really do that much at all. The value he generated laid in curating both the members that were allowed access to the mastermind, and the speakers like me who were asked to present on a particular topic.

Each member of the Mastermind is pre-screened through a Google form that asks a bunch of questions and then the organizer has a quick call with the applicant to ensure their values, beliefs, and interests align with the theme of the Mastermind. It's a brilliant way to group together a few of your readers and make money for doing little work, while adding enormous value.

You can also set up a Facebook/WhatsApp Group and have the members of the Mastermind interact with each other outside of the monthly call.

Retreats

The next level of a Mastermind is creating a retreat. This is where all the members of the Mastermind meet in one location (typically an exotic location that promotes clear thinking and relaxation) and spend time together and attend workshops that the organizer either runs or brings in presenters for.

These retreats can cost anywhere from \$5000-\$20,000 and are a way to enhance the experience, and for your mastermind members to have real-world relationships that often lead to business and personal opportunities—and sometimes even romantic relationships...haha.

10. Become a ghostwriter

One of the most popular writers of the last decade is a guy named Gary Vaynerchuk. You know what's remarkable? He hasn't written any of his New York Times Bestselling books and he's damn proud of it. Gary used a ghostwriter to have his books written and is nothing more than an ideas machine.

Some people suck at writing or don't have the time and are happy to pay somebody else. A ghostwriter does the following: learns how their client talks, transcribes their ideas from audio recordings into words, writes their content for them, and puts their client's name as the author while remaining invisible.

If you don't care about losing the rights to your work, this an option that can make you a bucketload of moolah.

The exhaustive list of money making strategies

The strategies mentioned so far are only a few and they are the best ones to consider, especially if you're a new writer.

I want to highlight some not so obvious strategies and begin with one idea you may not have considered. Writing on Medium has helped get me offers to be a co-founder in a startup, join the board of one of the biggest personal development companies on the planet, and be asked to co-invest in several existing businesses with significant traction. This is an extreme example of what is possible if you stick to this writing game for long enough. Expert status in any field, thanks to writing, is enormously powerful.

It's now time to get to a more expansive list that will open your eyes to what is possible as a Medium Writer when it comes to monetizing.

- Book deals (your audience is social proof)
- Paid columns in publications like Forbes
- Run in-person workshops
- Publishing traditional books
- Write on a platform that pays you to publish (Steemit is a decentralized example)
- Charge for a paid newsletter
- Supplement your writing with videos on the same topic and then get paid for ads that feature in your videos through platforms like Youtube
- Setup an eCommerce website and sell physical items that your audience can buy (think t-shirts with cool quotes).

What to do with paid opportunities you don't have time for

Some of the opportunities that come your way as a writer may not be suitable for you or you may not have time. Do not waste these opportunities. The best thing to do with an opportunity you can't fulfil is to forward it to someone you trust and can meet the requirements.

By paying it forward, in some cases, you're monetizing in the future. How? Those people that get those valuable opportunities from you may decide to give you one back in the future or gift you part of the reward if they choose.

I had an opportunity recently which couldn't be fulfilled due to my schedule and I gave it to another writer in my network who could via a 30-second introduction email linking both the requester and the writer in question.

Without expecting anything in return, this writer offered to promote my upcoming eBook to their audience as a thank you and for free.

Doing the right thing is always the right thing. Pay it forward.

Chapter 9—How to Utilize the Money

Making money through Medium is only half the strategy. It has taken me five years to understand what to do with the money I earn, even if it's small. The best tip I can give you is to buy back your time with the money you earn.

Don't buy useless stuff with your Medium income. Every physical item you buy takes away time that you have to use it how you wish. Buying stuff means having to always invest your time in working, rather than living life.

Having the time to write, or to read, or to be with your family feels better than any other purchase you can make. I always thought work was about making money before joining Medium. Now I see work as a means of buying time and spending it on the things that matter to me.

Give your money permission to grow

The money you make from writing can grow if you invest your money into the following areas (not financial advice obviously):

Invest in your writing skill

You are only as good as the last story you wrote. Your success as a writer can be taken away overnight, or platforms like Medium can change how they operate. The way you protect yourself and cap the downside is by investing some of your writing money back into your craft.

I invest in my writing skills by buying books on the subject, attending seminars, paying to meet with mentors, buying products like Grammarly, having a Medium Membership, and buying the books my fellow Medium Writers publish.

Invest in financial assets

Part of every dollar I earn as a writer goes into a Vanguard Index fund (called VTS and VOO) and multiplies each year through the power of compounding.

This is a lazy way to invest your money and help it grow, plus you get quarterly dividends for doing nothing. The assets you can invest in are bonds (loans to governments or businesses) and real estate that earns you rental income. Don't let your money be eaten away by inflation.

Invest in “surprise and delight” moments for readers

There are people who reach out to me on occasion and have been loyal readers for years. Every now and then it's a fantastic idea to create a surprise and delight moment.

It could be gifting them something as simple as a book or giving them a ticket to attend the same event you're going to that costs \$99. Creating these moments takes someone from being a reader to a potential friend for life and it feels good for everyone involved. Society loves reading the work of a generous person who is the real deal.

Invest in yourself

You also must invest in yourself. By investing in yourself, you allow yourself to earn more money, spend less money, invest more money in smart ways, help more people and work out what you value in life. Investing in yourself looks like this:

- Get a gym membership
- Buy healthy food that gives your body higher levels of energy
- Get a high-quality pillow to help with sleep
- Get a massage once in a while
- Buy a standup desk that allows you to write for longer and not destroy your back in the process
- Purchase holidays that take you away from writing (time away from writing is where the inspiration to write comes from)

Invest in random acts of kindness

This is the most important way to invest your money. Share your good fortune by buying random acts of kindness for people who have absolutely zero and need to see there is hope in the world.

As an example, every Christmas I email the local homeless shelter and ask them what gifts the children who come to the shelter are asking for. Then I buy those exact items and have them delivered to the homeless shelter anonymously. Many of these kids are victims of domestic violence and don't know what it's like to have a computer, food on the table or a roof over their head. Buying a stranger a present is not about the item itself; it's about showing that strangers care.

One year there was a request from a young boy in primary school, who was two years behind in his schooling, for a soccer ball and a pair of football boots. I bought both items for him and a few others got him a soccer uniform to wear. The gift cost absolutely nothing and as a result, later on, I found out that he was so taken back by the gift that he became committed to the sport of soccer and caught up in his studies at school.

Who you are before the money becomes who you are when you have the money, so start sharing your good fortune and create more of it right from the start of your writing journey.

There's more to writing than money

It's now time to flip things on their head a little. We have spoken a lot about money and it's all well and good. After making more than six-figures as a writer in a single year, outside of my day job, you know what's crazy?

When you discover the money that can come from writing, you'll realize it's not that important. It's who you become in the process and the people you get to help that is the biggest reward of all. Thinking of the money as an added bonus, not the focus, is a wise choice.

Chapter 10—Pro Tips for People Who Are Incredibly Serious

There is always a small section of any audience that becomes obsessed and want to go all-in and maximize their results. I'm one of these freaks and you might be too. So if you're in this category, here is how you go even further and really carve out a niche that might make you the next Tim Ferriss of the writing world.

Things to avoid

Before sharing a few advanced strategies, I wanted to mention what to avoid first. There are many traps as a writer and knowing what they are will help you turn pro quicker.

- Don't join groups where you clap each other's articles or talk about Medium. These groups focus on spreading fear about Medium and complaining about almost everything.
- Send your email subscribers limited numbers of emails. Segment your audience into two segments: readers who want daily emails and readers who don't. Readers that subscribe to daily emails can be managed using a tool like Substack
- Respect your audience and don't try to shift them around to every social media platform, thus diluting all the good work you're doing.
- Avoid overused quotes from the likes of Ben Franklin and share quotes in your stories from normal people like you and I.

The personal branding revolution

I've touched on this point already and it is worth reiterating. Your writing is not about you; it's about your readers. The rise of one's self leads to many downsides which can include mental illness and the fear of missing out. The pro way to avoid personal branding is to consider these guidelines:

- Do not use lists of endless hashtags at the bottom of every post (that includes your name as a hashtag).
- Do not quote yourself like you're bloody Nelson Mandela and accepting a prize for world peace.
- Do not tag people with millions of followers (they will never see the notification of you tagging them).
- Do not mention the phrase *personal brand* (you're not Coca Cola).
- Do not endlessly promote everything you do through every channel 24/7.
- Do not do humblebrags disguised as thank yous and being blessed as though you're giving a speech after winning the Oscar for best actor/actress.

You can even be uncommon and stand out from the crowd, thus becoming a pro, by following these guidelines:

- Pick the least perfect photo of yourself to use on your profile
- If taking photos or shooting video, don't use blurred backgrounds or have amazing LED lights shining on you

- Write content that has a good balance between high points and low points in your life (slightly more high points)
- Allow your grammar to be slightly off occasionally

Your errors and mistakes make you different. Imperfection is a magnet and when you allow these blemishes into your writing, you show people who you are and that brings readers closer to you.

Taking advantage of readers

There are writers and internet personalities who I've seen treat their audience like they're stupid and take advantage of them. It's cruel to watch. What do they do?

They write incomplete sentences that require the audience to click the "see more" button; they play games like offering free gifts/prizes for anyone who engages with a post; they challenge people to comment on their post which only benefits them; they tell people to follow them and say it will help them get a job or make money when it doesn't; they start with an idea in their writing and then bait and switch the reader into something that is entirely self-serving.

The online audience is smart and if you take advantage of them, they'll pay you back by switching off and ignoring your work.

Pro tips to consider

Now we have the tricks and lies out of the way, there are a few tips to try. These are professional techniques and some of them I have yet to try and some have been game-changing for me. Here we go.

Hire an illustrator for custom photos

If you want a story to pop and be completely customized to a theme you set, you can hire an illustrator to create the cover image and even create images that highlight a specific set of steps referenced in your writing.

There are two ways to do this:

1. Pay the illustrator a flat fee for each image
2. For unknown illustrators, offer them a deal where you feature their image and link back to their website

The way to find illustrators is by using platforms like Behance, or doing a Google image search for the word *illustration* and finding someone's work which resonates with you.

Custom menus

A writer named Coach Tony on Medium wrote a piece called “How to Configure Your iPhone to Work for You, Not Against You.” In this story, Tony used a custom menu with hyperlinks you can click, that take a reader to different sections of the story because the total read time is 75 minutes.

Experiment with custom menus to make navigation easier for your readers.

Optimize First for Single Tasking

- #1. Turn OFF (almost) all notifications
- #2. Hide social media slot machines
- #3. Hide messaging slot machines
- #4. Disable app review requests
- #5. Turn on Do Not Disturb
- #6. Be strategic about your wallpaper
- #7. Turn off Raise to Wake
- #8. Add the Screen Time widget
- #9. Add Content Restrictions
- #10. (Optional) Use Restrictions to turn off Safari
- #11. Organize your Apps and Folders alphabetically

Screenshot of a custom menu

Hire an editor

Having an editor is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they can help you edit your work and clean it up for you. On the other hand, they can create delays and ask you to insert words, phrases and sentences that are out of alignment with who you are as a writer.

As an example, one editor I hired wanted me to put “us” instead of “you” in certain stories. Using *us* is nice and it’s inclusive, but many of my stories are deeply personal and I’m talking directly to a single reader, not the entire world as though I’m Martin Luther King.

Try an editor and see if it helps or hinders you.

Podcast

There are some awesome writers who go on to create podcasts. A podcast is an extension of your writing. Writers like Tim Ferriss have a weekly podcast and even charge thousands of dollars for tech companies to advertise at the start of each episode. See if having a podcast fits your style.

Add audio narration via an embedded link at the top of your post

This is a brand new technique I'm trying. There is a startup called Play.ht that helps turn your Medium Stories into audio and you can even earn money from it. Audio narration is worth experimenting with for readers who prefer to listen to your stories.

Create your own Medium Publication

If you have a particular niche you write about that is not currently covered by existing publications on Medium, you could create your own. This allows you another level of personalization but it adds complexity and takes time to grow.

Add custom design assets

If you want to get really creative, you can have a designer create images you can use as page breaks or your name as a signature at the bottom of each story. Example below.



Screenshot of a page break "The Startup" publication uses.

Get a "New Yorker" subscription

Being a pro writer means reading a lot of work written by writers who are crushing it. A great place to read amazing stories is on websites like *The New Yorker*. A subscription costs peanuts and it will help you up your game.

Get featured in major publications who link back to Medium

Publications like Business Insider can (with permission) share your work with their audience and link back to the original article on Medium. They can also allow you to have a call to action in the footer of the story to help you get more email subscribers. There are two ways to get featured in a major publication: 1) Pitch them 2) Write for long enough that they find you.

Pitching a publication outside of Medium is pretty simple. Here's the template I use which you can copy:

Hi Editorial Team,

*I would like to pitch the following story "**How to Get Featured in Publications Owned by Medium so You Can Reach More People**" for your consideration. I think the story would fit in either the Writing or Personal Development category based on my research.*

Let me know if you're interested in the story. If not, all good. Open to any feedback or edits as well.

Regards,

Tim Denning

<Link to your Medium profile here>

Admit when you're wrong

This tip might seem a bit out of place. We're at the final chapter and talking about pro tips. How does admitting when you're wrong fit into the pro tips category? Well, not many people do it.

It's easy to admit when you're right or hold the world accountable to how you believe it should be, but it's ridiculously hard to admit when you're wrong. The pro writers admit when they're wrong and this level of honesty helps them cut through the noise and build strong relationships with their audience. You will be wrong or say something terrible. Admit it.

These pro tips lead to raving fans

There are two dimensions to your audience: readers and raving fans. They are very different concepts and understanding them both is crucial.

A reader consumes your work occasionally and comments once in a while. Sometimes they stick with you and other times they find new writers to follow, which is fine.

A raving fan is the opposite. They follow everything you do, comment on every one of your posts, advocate for you, email you when a family member dies, battle the trolls in the comments section on your behalf without being asked, and show up to events you speak at or workshops you run. When you release a book, they're the first ones to buy it and share it with their community.

One raving fan is worth at least a thousand normal followers.

To attract raving fans like a pro, focus on the reader and making a human connection, and forget ROI (return on investment).

Closing Thought

You made it all the way to the end of the eBook. Congratulations!

Writing is one hell of a journey and one of the best decisions you'll ever make. It takes time and helps you grow as a person. When you look back after a few years on what you've written, you realize that you're a completely different person. That growth is an incredible gift that will help you expand your vision and find new ways to make money so you have the option to work less.

As a writer, your greatest asset is the way you think and then translate that thinking into words that are published and read by other people.

Add your experience into everything you write, be kind to every person you meet, be helpful, be yourself, and tell stories that make people feel something deep inside them. Focus on how you can be helpful and you'll never have to worry about how to make money from writing.

Anyone can write on Medium and the opportunity is one you'll never regret.

Stay in touch

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