2/01/16 to 2/05/16

**WRITING:**

* *Voice is the author's*[*style*](http://fictionwriting.about.com/od/crafttechnique/g/style.htm)*, the quality that makes his or her writing unique, and which conveys the author's attitude, personality, and character; or*
* *Voice is the characteristic speech and thought patterns of a*[*first-person*](http://fictionwriting.about.com/od/glossary/g/firstperson.htm)*narrator; a persona. Because voice has so much to do with the reader's experience of a work of*[*literature*](http://classiclit.about.com/od/literaryterms/g/aa_whatisliter.htm)*, it is one of the most important elements of a piece of writing.* ***Also Known As:****persona*

An exercise for finding your voice Not sure where to start? No problem. Most of us need help understanding our voice. Here’s a short exercise that can help you — just follow these 10 steps:

1. Describe yourself in **three adjectives**. *Example: snarky, fun, and flirty.*
2. Ask (and answer) the question: **“Is this how I *talk*?”**
3. Imagine your**ideal reader**. Describe him in detail. Then, write to him, and only him. *Example: My ideal reader is smart. He has a sense of humor, a short attention span, and is pretty savvy when it comes to technology and pop culture. He’s sarcastic and fun, but doesn’t like to waste time. And he loves pizza.*
4. Jot down at least five books, articles, or blogs **you like to read**. Spend some time examining them. How are they alike? How are they different? What about *how* they’re written intrigues you? Often what we admire is what we aspire to be. *Example: Copyblogger, Chris Brogan, Seth Godin, Ernest Hemingway, and C.S. Lewis. I like these writers, because their writing is intelligent, pithy, and poignant.*
5. List your favorite artistic and **cultural influences**. Are you using these as references in your writing, or avoiding them, because you don’t think people would understand them? *Example: I use some of my favorite bands’ music in my writing to teach deeper lessons.*
6. **Ask other people**: “What’s my voice? What do I sound like?” Take notes of the answers you get.
7. **Free-write.**Just go nuts. Write in a way that’s most comfortable to you, without editing. Then go back and read it, asking yourself, “Do I publish stuff that sounds like this?”
8. Read something you’ve recently written, and honestly ask yourself, **“Is this something I would read?”** If not, you *must* change your voice.
9. Ask yourself: “Do I enjoy what I’m writing *as*I’m writing it?” If it **feels like work**, you may not be writing like yourself. (Caveat: Not every writer loves the act of writing, but it’s at least worth asking.)
10. **Pay attention to how you’re feeling.** How do you feel before publishing? *Afraid? Nervous? Worried?* Good. You’re on the right track. If you’re completely calm, then you probably aren’t being vulnerable. Try writing something [dangerous](http://goinswriter.com/write-dangerous/), something a little more *you*. Fear can be good. It motivates you to make your writing matter.