

## **Marian Calabro's 9 Favorite Books on Writing**

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This is a highly arbitrary list. I like these books because all of them have helped me in one way or another. I am always looking for good writing about writing to share with the writers in my groups. Please pass along your recommendations via the contact page on my website anytime.

***Writing Alone and With Others*** by Pat Schneider / Oxford University Press, 2003  
Despite the publisher, this is not an academic book. It overflows with wisdom and exercises from the woman who created a new way of writing in groups when she burned out on MFA-style workshops, which can be nitpicking and lifeless (MFA = Master of Fine Arts degree).

***A House of My Own: Stories from My Life*** by Sandra Cisneros / Knopf, 2015  
Not a how-to book about writing, but definitely a how-to memoir about finding your own voice and having the guts to live a writer's life.

***The Playwright's Guidebook*** by Stuart Spencer / Faber & Faber, 2002  
***The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry***  
by Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux / W. W. Norton, 1997  
***Ordinary Genius*** by Kim Addonizio / W. W. Norton, 2010  
All these books transcend the boundaries of a single genre and have lots of good exercises.

***The Midnight Disease: The Drive to Write, Writer's Block, and the Creative Brain***  
by Alice W. Flaherty, M.D. / Houghton Mifflin, 2004  
Quirky, dense....The author is a neurologist and highly original writer who asks: what underlies the human ability, desire, and compulsion to write? The answers have to do with our individual brain chemistries. Her discussion of hypergraphia—the compulsion to write—is even more fascinating than her take on its opposite, writer's block.

### ***Zen in the Art of Writing: Essays on Creativity***

Ray Bradbury / Capra Press, 1990

Like a life preserver, this book once helped get me onto shore during a bad patch of mental storms in my life. I have little taste for science fiction and fantasy, Bradbury's main genres, but anything he writes just about leaps off the page. Don't miss his formula for writing fiction (p. 7), his noun list idea (p. 17), his discussion of "quiet stories" (p. 43) ... his passion is contagious.

### ***The Artist's Way***

#### ***Walking in The World***

Julia Cameron / Tarcher, various dates

Along with Bradbury's *Zen*, these books rank high as creativity starters and confidence builders for me. You'll know right away if you like them. The exercises are a little wacky but worth doing. I find myself rereading one or both of these books yearly, usually in the autumn.

I also like Stephen King's *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, Walter Mosley's *This Year You Write Your Novel*, and William Sloane's out-of-print classic *The Craft of Writing*. Annie Dillard, Anne Lamott, and Natalie Goldberg are hugely popular but they do not ring my bell. Browse in your library at Dewey Decimal No. 808 to see which writing guides appeal to you.

In the end, I always paraphrase Pat Schneider: ***The only worthwhile test of any book, class, leader, or workshop is whether it makes you want to write more.***