

Scottish Association of Writers ~ Pen-Tips for Authors

SASKIA SARGINSON'S TIPS FOR AUTHORS



1. It may sound obvious, but a synopsis is an essential tool. It's not just a guide or plan; the act of writing it will help you understand your story and how you can structure it. It is worth spending time and effort on a detailed synopsis before you begin to write.
2. Time-lines are essential. And I like to sketch out the arc of the story and key plot points in landscape form.
3. I always experiment with writing in first-person and third-person, and in different tenses, to see what seems to fit the story best.
4. Don't be afraid to write! Fill the blank screen or paper with what comes naturally. Often I discard what I first write – it can just be a way of getting me into the book.
5. Write something that you are passionate about. You need to love your story and your characters. There is no point in trying to second-guess what the publishing world wants.
6. Writing a novel is a long haul. You need to pace yourself. But you also need to find the hours to work. I have a fairly rigid schedule that I stick to – otherwise life's demands would take over.
7. Everyone has different methods of editing. I like to re-read and refine as I go, but I don't keep perfecting, I prefer to get the story down. At first draft stage, I usually cut chunks of text. Then I start again with the edit. Rigorous editing is the key to a polished story.
8. Step away from the book sometimes – put it away for a week or two so that you can come back to it with a fresh eye.
9. Find a literary friend or a writing group – someone you trust to read the first draft and get back to you with observations and comments.
10. Keep reading – not just novels in the same genre as your own book – but read widely and outside your comfort zone.

The Twins (Piatkus) is a Richard & Judy (autumn 2013) Book Club pick. It's published in 20 countries.

Without You, (Piatkus) is out on kindle in March 2014, and in paperback in July 2014.

Saskia is working on her third novel at the moment.

You can find her on Twitter and Face Book and on the Little, Brown website.