

Lack of preparation is setting yourself up to fail: At the very least, have a plot outline. If you know where your story is going, you will have less trouble with writer's block, losing focus and writing directionless chapters that are ultimately filler. Characters outlines are also great. If you know your characters, you can write them with personality. It doesn't have to be super detailed, but knowing their core motivations is critical to defining their character.

Have as many chapters under your belt as you can before you start. I had 75 ready to go, which I know seems excessive, but looking back I wish I'd had even more. That number can be much smaller if you aren't dumping chapters all week like I did, though. This helps in a number of ways. One is that by that point you will have found your groove and probably want to go back and clean up the earlier chapters, maybe put in a little foreshadowing for events that occur later. If you haven't released them yet, that's easy. Another is that if you do find an audience, you'll have some advance chapters for when you launch your Patreon or equivalent. Which leads us to:

Don't jump the gun: Be patient. Don't drop two chapters and then launch a Patreon, assuming everything will go great. It won't. If you haven't built an audience yet, you'll get maybe 2 dollars per month, which will feel bad for you and actually hurt you when people do check your Patreon, see the lack of a following and think you'll probably quit. Be patient and build an audience. Get them hungry for more chapters and *then* launch the Patreon where they can get advance chapters. You do have extra chapters ready right? If you time your Patreon launch right, then the eager audience you've built up will jump on board and create buzz for you.

There are elements on Royal Road that will help you build an audience if you have a good story. There are power users that trawl for good, fresh stories to put on recommendation lists. After a month, you qualify for the front page trending list, and getting on that front page is a HUGE bump in readership. That surge is a massive turning point. You might even get people asking for a Patreon with extra chapters, which is exactly where you want to be. It's a good time to put up a dedicated discord, too, although that can come earlier if you like. Too early and leaving it a ghost town is something to avoid, though.

So, how do you get onto that trending list? Readers are very sensitive to red flags that a story might get dropped. We've all been burned by a story we liked going on permanent hiatus and the kind of readers you want will smell blood in the water like sharks. **Consistency is king.** Seriously. Make sure your readers learn exactly when to expect a chapter and that the chapter will **always** be there on schedule.

Set a schedule and keep it, which means figuring out exactly how quickly you can write. You can practise while getting all those extra chapters ready. You do have extra chapters ready right? Spend a few weeks writing at the permanent schedule you intend to take up. If you can do it without burning out, great. Otherwise, revise your plans. Make sure to leave yourself some breathing room, too. You'll be spending more time than you think on the

logistics of posting chapters and dealing with readers in the comments and on discord. At least, you should be.

Release rate is also important. There are only handful of very successful stories that release weekly or slower, and they each had one of two things happen: Either they built an audience with a faster initial release rate or they slowly built their audience over years. Literal years. If you go that route, you need to show a level of polish that's worth the wait. I'm talking multiple revisions, rigorous edits and fastidious proof reading. Readers will expect every chapter to be solid gold.

Faster release rate is much better for building an audience, but harder to maintain. One thing I did was have triple releases the first week and double releases the second. You do have extra chapters ready right? A lot of readers won't look at a story with only a handful of chapters. If you do your initial release with more than one chapter per day, staggering the times, then you get more exposure on the new chapter section of the front page, which might just pick up a reader or catch the attention of a power user. A large part of my early success was a positive review that landed on the front page in the reviews section, which was my initial readership surge. You also get enough chapters quickly to both get a reader interested and show them that you're not just a dabbler.

If you want to do this as a job, then treat it like a job: That means a level of professionalism, not just in what you write but how you write. Consistency. Not releasing first drafts but actually doing an editing pass or two, even if you're doing quick releases. Community engagement. Actively respond to your early commenters. There won't be many, but show that you're invested. Maintain professionalism, though. Take criticism gracefully, even when you disagree with it. Do not, under any circumstances, get in a flame war with a reader.

Even if you do what you love, there is a lot of work involved if you want to make a living at it. The writing part is great and I absolutely love it, but be prepared to spend more time than you expect on peripheral tasks. This is necessary and will absolutely feel like work, because it is. That's the difference between a hobby and a job. Either is fine, but don't go into it thinking that you can make a living treating your source of income as a hobby.

Get ready to have people tell you that you suck: They will, a lot, and it's a real kick in the balls (or local equivalent). You'll get people telling you how much they love it, too, presuming it's actually decent, but it's the people who hate it that really sting. You will get negative reviews. You just will. Everyone does. You need to learn which ones to dismiss, and which ones have valid criticism. Read them all; accepting that you have room to improve is critical to getting better.