



Writing tips from  
**Patrice Lawrence**

**National**  
**wRITING**  
**Day**  **23 June 2022**

**FIRST STORY**

## ABOUT PATRICE LAWRENCE

Patrice is the author of nine books, including *Eight Pieces of Silva* and *Orangeboy*. She won the inaugural Jhalak Children's & Young Adult Prize, was awarded the Waterstones Prize for Older Children's Fiction and the Bookseller YA Prize, and has been shortlisted for the Costa Children's Book Award.

**In this resource Patrice shares her tips, insights and advice on writing creatively.**

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# THE YOUNG WRITERS FESTIVAL 2022

The Young Writers Festival is England's only festival dedicated to inspiring young writers, bringing together First Story participants from across England for an incredible day of workshops, talks, performances and more.

The opening plenary on the Lady Mitchell Hall stage featured hugely popular YA author (and First Story Ambassador) Patrice Lawrence in conversation with three First Story students.

Their wide-ranging discussion covered Patrice's writing process, how she overcomes writer's block and develops her characters, her advice for young writers and so much more.

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**WATCH THE FULL  
INTERVIEW HERE.**

## TIP #1

# FIND YOUR WRITING VOICE

**Sharing from personal experience, Patrice shared that it was difficult at first to find her own voice given the representation she saw in literature.**

Think about your own voice, your family, your experience and who you are, and all of what makes you, and bring those points of reference to your characters. Try setting a timer for five minutes and writing about an enjoyable experience you have had or someone that is important to you to help bring this to the surface.



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I had no idea that people like me could be writers, it just wasn't a conceivable thing. It took me a really long time to find my writing voice because all the books that I read as a child were so-called classic books. It taught me about story, but it also told me that writing is a certain thing and that people like me do not belong in books or write books.

## TIP #2

# FIND A WRITING BUDDY

**Across the country, groups of young people are meeting up weekly, to develop their creativity, confidence and writing skills, in extracurricular workshops led by our inspiring Writers-in-Residence in our Young Writers Programme.**

Beyond this, try to see if you can find a trusted friend to help encourage and drive you forward in your writing, and do the same for them too.

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## TIP #3

# DON'T WORRY ABOUT FINISHING EVERYTHING

**Patrice admitted that she has lots of notes on her phone, notepads and more of writing or sketches, and that it is all part of the process.**

You can always come back to ideas, characters or plots and develop them if you want to. Or not. Playing with ideas is part of the beauty of writing and creating. Don't let the fear of not finishing something stop you from expressing yourself.



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If you don't finish anything, that's fine. I have loads of little notes on my phone and notepads of ideas. Writing a character or doing a little sketch on a bus on the way to school is absolutely fine!

## TIP #4

# USE QUICK WRITING EXERCISES TO VOICE YOUR IDEAS

**Patrice admits she tends to do a lot of mind mapping before writing. Just getting ideas down on paper can be really powerful.**

Practise this by doing rapid writing exercises (around seven minutes) where you do not have time to overthink what you are doing. Although it may seem scary at first, it is a fantastic way to produce and voice new ideas.

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## TIP #5

# WHEN YOU HAVE WRITER'S BLOCK GO BACK TO BASICS

**Patrice shared that even she gets writer's block sometimes as she has so many ideas!**

Her advice is to go back to the characters and think about the following three things:

- 1) What are they afraid of?
- 2) What is most precious to them?
- 3) What do they want most in the world?



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I need to know what their fear is what they are afraid of because then as a writer, you can throw it at them to build tension. I need to give them something precious like a crocodile, a memory or a book.

And lastly, most importantly, I need to know what they want. Then I just problem solve. I need to get the character from A to B. To do that, I do a little mind map or a list.

## TIP #6

# SWITCH BETWEEN WRITING METHODS

**One of the key things Patrice shared that works for her when writing is switching between the laptop and writing by hand.**

Switching between methods helps ideas come freely. It can also feel easier not to edit yourself whilst writing. Next time you are having difficulties writing, why not give this a try?



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I swap between those two (laptop and writing by hand) because I feel like I am using different bits of my head. I think it's that thing about not overthinking it. Sometimes it helps to do a mind map and be done with it because your head is not going there that day.

## TIP #7

# ENJOY IT

**As Patrice says, "writing is not meant to be a chore".**

When you are writing, do it for the pure joy of expressing yourself and trying something new.

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# Feeling proud of what you've written?

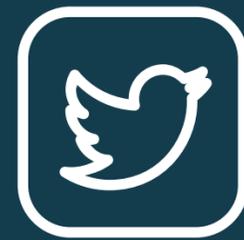
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