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The 29 Steps To Being A Great Copywriter

1. Put yourself in the shoes of the person you want to buy the product. Why should he or she want to buy it? What are their interests, their worries? Tap into them.
2. Be yourself. If you feel emotional about a product, chances are somebody else will share that feeling.
3. Try and work with a student who wants to be an art director. You can DIY, but your ideas will improve with the dialogue. You know the old saying, "Two heads are better than one".
4. Be interested in life. Talk to people. See movies. Read books and magazines. Listen to music. Go to the theatre. Go to art galleries. See exhibitions of photography. Go to the supermarket and do the shopping. Watch how people behave. Save up all the good jokes that you hear.
5. Make sure your body copy has an interesting beginning, middle and end. The beginning should extend the thought in the headline, the middle should have a meaty fact to keep the reader's interest. Ideally, the ending should take the reader back to the headline and an amusing twist on the original thought. After all, it stopped them in the first place.
6. Read your copy out loud as you write it. If it's lumpy and unnatural you will hear it.
7. Imagine you're talking to your best friend, explaining why they should buy the product.
8. Don't worry about copying the style of another copywriter. Painters do it, as do musicians. It's how we all learn. Eventually you find a voice of your own. (Although it's important that your writing doesn't become a formula, each product should have its own "voice".)
9. Try and build a personality for the product. It's back to that voice again.
10. Don't be afraid of the word "you" in the headline or body copy. It personalises the ad and makes it more friendly.
11. Never throw away the headlines you don't use. Those thoughts may work well in the body copy and give it some extra personality.
12. If you're not sure about an idea or a piece of copy it's probably wrong.
13. All writers "dry up" at some stage. Don't worry about it. Go for a walk. Catch a movie. Read a book.

14. Know where the ad is going to appear. If it's in a magazine or a newspaper there are very different readerships. The 'Bulletin' reader, for instance, has very different tastes to the 'Woman's Day' reader. Bear that in mind when you're writing.
15. Stick your concepts up on the wall and live with them. A good test of ads is the "overnight" test. Do you still like the ad the next day?
16. Could a competitor run your ad? Is it unique to the brand?
17. Learn from your mistakes. Listen to the focus groups. Listen to the client. In fact, the ability to listen is an essential talent for copywriters.
18. Work your little cotton socks off. You are unlikely to get this opportunity again. Tell your mates that you're sorry but you can't go out. There will be plenty of time later.
19. Make sure you have fun. Advertising can be a giggle if you approach it in the right frame of mind.
20. Be resilient. Take criticism. The ability to bounce back with other ideas if the client says "no" is another important talent.
21. Research, research, research. You can't do enough of that. Ask your friends why they might use a particular product that you're advertising.
22. Should you write long or short copy? Just write all that you have to say about the product and stop. End of argument.
23. Don't try to be too clever. Your creativity shouldn't get in the way of the product benefit. It should present it in the best light. Advertising is like an advocate for the client's product. Be simple and straightforward.
24. Seek criticism. All good Creatives have the confidence to seek out comment. "What do you think of this? Have you seen an idea like this before? Is it dull?"
25. Get out of town if you can. There's another world out there. One with a push and pull of its own.
26. Think visually. Words do not live in splendid isolation. You need to think of the headline and picture as a whole. Showing a picture of a penguin with a headline that reads 'A penguin is best' does not advance the learning curve. If the headline read 'Quick, think of a shirt' the reader might think of Bonds.
27. Please yourself. You have to be pleased with your idea first. If you don't like it, why bother?
28. Don't be intimidated by not being able to draw. Many of the great art directors can't either. Stick men can still tell the visual story adequately.
29. Tell everyone you know that you're now a copywriter, even if you've just started out. Word of mouth is the best form of advertising and you'll be surprised how much work there is when people know what you do.

Byline:

Bernadette Schwerdt is the founder of The Australian School of Copywriting. She is a freelance copywriter and business coach. She can be contacted on +61 419891932 or at info@copyschool.com. Visit <http://www.copyschool.com> for details about seminar and home study courses on copywriting.