

the
ninety seven
BEST
Creativity Tips
EVER!

97

Eric Maisel

The 97 Best Creativity Tips Ever!

© Eric Maisel, 2011. All rights reserved

ericmaisel@hotmail.com



Please enjoy and make use of the following 97 tips.
May they help you create deeply and daily!

1.

Be consistent in showing up. Getting to your creative work only once in a while won't keep it alive. Make "routine" and "regularity" sacred words!

2.

Who knows how many artists fail because the light that shines through them is refracted in a thousand directions and not concentrated in a single beam? Pick projects and complete them! It is not really possible to work on a thousand things at once.

3.

One of the best ways to help yourself create every day is to craft a starting ritual that you begin to use regularly and routinely. When your ritual becomes habitual you will find yourself moving effortlessly from not creating to creating.

4.

Make the following pledge: "I will do some creative work every day, if only for fifteen or twenty minutes." Honor your pledge for the next two weeks and spend fourteen consecutive days creating.

5.

Looking for only the perfect time to create? Forget about it! You are always in the middle of something so it is right in the middle of things that your creating must also happen.

6.

Even small amounts of time can be used for creating. Do you make use of fifteen minutes here and twenty minutes there?

7.

Are you good at capturing your own creative thoughts? Or do you let them slip away by telling yourself that they weren't really all that good or all that important? Stop that! Start right now doing a better job of capturing and recording your ideas.

8.

You must reckon with your own character. Creativity requires curiosity. Are you curious enough? Creativity requires risk-taking. Are you willing to risk? Creativity requires energy. Can you marshal and unleash your energy? Creativity requires patience. Have you cultivated that quality? Turn yourself into the artist you need to be!

9.

Telling our truth can bring us pain and get us into trouble, but worse pain and worse trouble await us if we keep silent. Tell your truth—carefully, artfully, and courageously!

10.

Say yes to your creative work! Avoid maybe like the plague. Maybe is a state that takes you right to the edge of meaninglessness. Maybe plays to your weaknesses, your anxieties, and your doubts. Maybe frustrates you and disappoints you. Avoid the maybe trap!

11.

Reframe “discipline” as “devotion.” Luciano Pavarotti said, “People think I’m disciplined. It’s not discipline, it’s devotion, and there’s a great difference.” Think about that difference!

9

12.

Boredom is the thing that regularly arrives between excitements and episodes of meaning. If you are bored do not say, “I am so bored that I can’t possibly create.” Instead say, “I am so bored—I had better create!”

13.

Have you figured out a form for your creative work? Nothing really exists until it has a form!

14.

What are your process, your style, and your rhythm? Get clear in your own mind how you create. Then accept your way of working—or change it if it’s not effective.

15.

To decide to reach for this blue and not that one, to switch styles or subject matter, to move, in the middle of a sentence, in one direction or another, to commit to this book when that one is also calling, are the sorts of choices that artists must make if they are to function. Remember: you can’t avoid choosing!

16.

You can jumpstart your creativity in the following way: 1. Ask yourself an interesting question 2. Try to answer it.

17.

Unexplored territory has no maps. You will have to go into the unknown guided only by your inner compass. Become an intrepid explorer!

18.

Wildness is part of the process. Say, “I am one wild creature!” Shout it out, if you dare!

19.

Do not fear the darkness. It is in that darkness that your new work resides. You must proceed blind and uncertain into that darkness if you intend to go deep. Down in that darkness reside your future accomplishments.

20.

Not everything you create will work well. When something doesn't work you can say, “I'm an idiot!” or you can say, “Such things happen.” Which thought do you suppose serves you better?

21.

Creativity flows from self-relationship. You are the student and you are the teacher. The next time a creative problem arises ask yourself, “What do I already know that will help me solve this?” Begin to see yourself as your own best resource.

22.

Allow for fortunate accidents. Pull out odds and ends from your refrigerator. Try combinations of food—pickles with peanut butter, apple juice with radish slices. Most will taste horrible. But maybe one will be a revelation!

23.

Intending is more powerful than wishing. Intend to create. Hold the intention in your heart and in your belly. Grow creative through powerful intention.



24.

How satisfactory is the life you lead between your creative stints? Are there some important improvements to be made? As much as we might wish it to be, life isn't only about creating!

25.

Creativity is your teacher. Pick a creative project whose express purpose is to teach you something about your situation or your nature. If no project comes to mind, try your hand at a ten-page autobiography.

26.

Have you abandoned some creative project that still retains a lot of juice? Return to it with optimism, an open heart, and a firm belief in renewed possibility!

27.

If you regularly block, what do you think are the sources of your blockage? Do you block only on certain work? Do you block at certain points in the process? Do you block at certain times of the year? Become your own expert on blockage!

28.

Learn some anxiety management tools. Anxiety makes us undisciplined. Learn a deep breathing technique or a relaxation technique to help you stay put. Anxiety is part of the process—learn how to manage it!

29.

A creative block is the wall you erect to ward off the anxiety you suppose you'll experience if you sit down to work. Don't predict that anxiety! And if it happens to come—so what, you can manage your anxiety.

30.

Time magically disappears but it only appears when you schedule it. Get your creating on your schedule!

31.

You can't plan in advance for everything – for every mood swing, every mistake, and every shift in your circumstances. But you can plan to show up—that is three-quarters of the battle!

32.

Learn how to go directly to your work. When your work bell tolls at the appointed hour, answer it. Stop waiting!

33.

Schedule your creativity. Prepare a schedule for getting to your creative projects and commit to that schedule. Work on your current project for a month without second-guessing your choice or bad-mouthing your progress.

34.

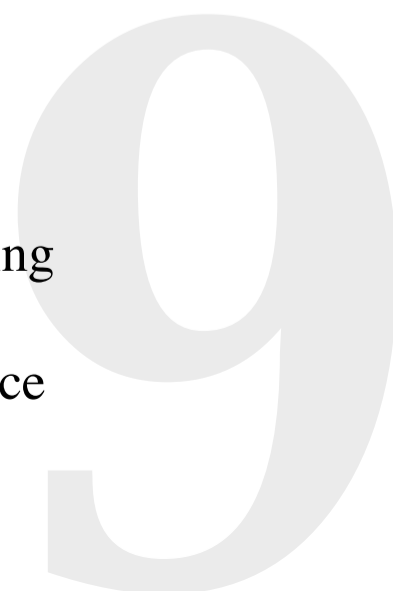
Create first thing each morning. An hour of creating prevents a day of guilty feelings. Start each day making some meaning. Grow creative by putting creating first!

35.

Work every single day on a creative project, even for just an hour, Saturdays and Sundays included.

36.

Don't shrug away the fact that you're not completing your creative work. Get to the last sentence of the last page of the last revision. Then launch your piece into the marketplace. If you are not completing projects, do not accept that from yourself!



37.

Divide a sheet of paper into three columns. Label the first column “Starting,” the second column “Working,” and the third column “Completing.”

List as many strategies as you can to help you start, work, and complete your creative projects.

38.

Creativity at times needs solitude. If solitude is eluding you, find an empty room right now and do not leave it for two or three hours. Go to a quiet place and work!

39.

What do you need to unlearn in order to become more creative?

40.

Enjoy the process – the mistakes and messes along with the successes. Don’t need your work to go smoothly. The ups and downs are part of the process.

41.

Get cognitively stronger! Use the following three-step cognitive tool: 1) Identify negative thoughts like “I have no talent”; 2) Dispute them by saying, “No, that’s not true!”; 3) Replace them with affirmations like “Of course I’m talented!” Start today to get a better grip on your mind.

42.

You might recognize that talent is so loaded a word that you would be wise to forget about it altogether and just keep on working. Forget about talent. Concentrate on showing up.

43.

Grow creative by not fearing mistakes. Put too much salt in the soup. Leave the sugar out of the cookie dough. Feel the feelings that come with making stupid mistakes. Then say, “I can survive these feelings!” Remind yourself that you must grow very easy with mistakes and messes.

44.

Affirm your creative efforts. Affirmations are not bound up in rules. An affirmation can be long or short, poetic or plain. If you love a phrase and find that it helps you then that is a valid affirmation. Create some powerful affirmations!

45.

Who isn't a little inclined to take shortcuts? But be careful! Shortcuts can kill the creative process. Avoid illegitimate shortcuts when you create.

46.

Self-deception stifles creativity. Anatole France put it this way: “It is in the ability to deceive oneself that the greatest talent is shown.” Are their truths that you need to admit to yourself? Admit them!

47.

Art happens on dull days too. Do not wait for inspiration. Do not wait for anything. Grow creative by regularly and routinely creating.

48.

We have enough experiences in a day to make art for a decade. Never fear a shortage of great ideas. If you show up often enough and grow quiet enough to hear them, great ideas will percolate right up.

9

49.

Make sure you have a private space where you can get your creative work done. Make that space. Secure that space. Get agreements so that no one will bother you in your space. Create, secure, and honor your space!

50.

If you live with people—with parents, with a mate, with children, with roommates—get agreements. Let them know that often in your private space silence is golden and that sometimes you are not available.

51.

Say to yourself “What does my creative work require?” and honor your answer. Need to tidy up your space? Get some supplies? Do some research? Do it!

52.

Many people are embarrassed to create in public. It feels unseemly to them, like kissing in plain view. Deal with that self-consciousness! Learn to make a spectacle of yourself. If you don't, you'll feel uncreative everywhere except in your private space.

53.

Feeling too chaotic to create? Don't think that way! Instead say, “Let me take this chaos and use it to create a world.” Invite that unwanted guest right into your private space.

54.

Revere beauty without becoming enchanted by it. Aim for it but also aim for truth and goodness, just in case they, and not beauty, are the real things of value. Not beauty alone but truth, beauty, and goodness.

55.

Concentrate, but also surrender. Surrender, but also concentrate. Sometimes the one, sometimes the other, always both!

56.

Creativity requires persistence. Are you practiced at sticking to things for years at a time?

57.

Learn by doing. There is no other way. Experience is the best and the only real teacher. Grow creative through conscious effort!

58.

As you shop your creative projects you'll find yourself waiting on news from the marketplace. While you're waiting be patient but not idle. Responses from the world can take a very long time! Keep working.

59.

Mystery is the artist's territory. Excellence lies in the direction of mystery! Let go of your need to know and buy bewilderment instead.

60.

It is remarkable that we can hold the entirety of a year in imagination long enough to make decisions about what we'd like to accomplish. Practice this useful skill right now. Picture the coming year and make decisions about what you want to start, work on, and complete.

61.

Know your own rhythms. During what part of the year do you generate the most ideas? When do you need to

rest? When do you like to play? Honor your own unique process by giving your needs time on your calendar.

62.

Expect setbacks. No artist experiences one success after another. Determine to come back. Remember that you will need to demonstrate your courage all over again.

63.

There's necessary arrogance and unnecessary arrogance. Learn the difference. Your creative life depends on fostering the one and minimizing the other.

64.

There are just too many ideas to keep in one's head. Coax yourself into the habit of organization. Get better organized and stay organized.

65.

What if it takes years and years to create beautifully or to sell anything? You will need stamina. Get fit and stay fit—emotionally as well as physically.

66.

When we aren't really using ourselves we feel disappointed, depressed, and worse. Use yourself! Challenge yourself more, take new risks, inaugurate grand projects, and use yourself to your full capacity.

67.

There is always the doing—the repeated doing over time—the doing by which we learn our craft. Do so much that you become a master, even as you remain your own apprentice.

68.

Do you have a plan to survive the countless rejections that will come your way? Create that plan!

69.

Do you keep your creative work close enough? Is it always available? Keep it so close that when you turn around you run right into it!

70.

It is so much more exhausting not to work than to work. If you procrastinate you'll feel more exhausted than if you'd created for hours. Never forget how tired not working makes you feel.

71.

If you love solitude and indwelling, you can live much too claustrophobically. Remember to throw open your windows and let some fresh air in!

72.

Whatever pain and suffering you've experienced in your life has been a blessing at least in this one regard: you know some true things that you couldn't have learned any other way. Do those experiences find a way into your art?

73.

Do you need creating to be easy? If you do, change your mind! Creating is often exhausting. Accept that you've embarked on an arduous journey.

74.

You and you alone decide what is meaningful. Use your creative nature to make new meaning each day. Treat meaning as a wellspring and a renewable resource

and you will never run short of meaning again.

75.

Take that risky first step. Picture yourself separated from your creative work by a chasm that is a thousand feet deep but only a foot wide. Yes, it is deep! But see how easy it is to cross right over?

76.

Create everywhere. Create in the rain. Create by the side of the road. Create wherever you find yourself!

77.

Say, "I will astonish myself." Then you're bound to astonish others.

78.

You are an individual. Think for yourself. Decide for yourself. Create in your own voice!

79.

Don't say that you're unable to craft beautiful things until you've given yourself years and years of trying. What if your grand piece is destined to be your ninth and you stop at eight?

80.

Forget about control. We control so little! Aim for influence instead. Become a positive influence on your creative life.

81.

Set grand goals and mean them. It is better to have a grand goal and really work toward it than to half-set a paltry goal and, because of its paltriness, find

that you're bored even before you've started.

82.

Often you're resistant to getting started. That resistance is just a thin veneer between you and your work but it feels like a concrete wall. Get up and crash right through it! Feel like a bull or a battering ram. Don't let a film of resistance cost you decades.

83.

Creating involves you in an endless series of decisions: this project must be abandoned, this project must not be abandoned, this project is gorgeous but will earn you nothing, this project is mediocre but marketable. No one can make these decisions for you.

84.

There may be days when the work frustrates you horribly. Maybe you'll downright hate it. Those are the days to love your work! Remember to love your work especially on the days you hate it.

85.

If you hide your work away, no one can criticize it or reject it. Isn't that clever! But does that full-proof protective maneuver really serve you?

86.

You must appraise your work. Appraising isn't cold-hearted criticism. It is the effort you make to turn your raw ideas into elaborated beauty. Appraising is your duty.

87.

No desire, no creativity. Fall in love with each of your creative projects! Burn to create.

88.

You will never retire from creating. Why would you? Happily rush on, restlessly and hungrily, to the very end!

89.

When a thing is not done, continuing to work on it is the strength. When it is done, the strength lies in stopping. Work, appraise, complete; work, appraise, complete: this is the creative life.

90.

You will have your critics. What will you do about them?

91.

Survival issues are bound to intrude. There is always the rent to pay. The facts of existence weigh heavily. Create anyway. It is the way we rejoice right in the middle of a hard reality!

92.

Hope comes and goes. Sometimes it leaves for years and decades. Only you can rekindle your own hope. Announce some new hope for your creative life and take action in that direction.

93.

There is really no substitute for showing up. Showing up does not solve every problem but not showing up absolutely does—as a complete negative.

94.

Invest in your current project. Do it and complete it. Then detach from it as you send it out into the world. Then invest in your next project. That is the dance: of attachment and detachment.

95.

Which parts of the process do you want to skip? The plotting? The cobbling? The revising? Learn which parts you are inclined to skip—and don't skip them!

96.

In your mind's eye, picture yourself never giving up. If you are a writer, picture yourself still writing at thirty, at forty, at fifty, at sixty, at seventy, at eighty, at ninety, at a hundred. Picture yourself never giving up, despite the challenges that come your way. Never give up.

97.

Regularly congratulate yourself as you create—not out of narcissism but in your role as your own good friend and advocate. Be your own best supporter!

9

Here are a few of my books that you might like to have accompany you on your creative journey:

The Van Gogh Blues

Mastering Creative Anxiety

Creative Recovery

Fearless Creating

Coaching the Artist Within

Creativity for Life

The Creativity Book

A Writer's Space

A Writer's Paris

A Writer's San Francisco

Enjoy!

