

Ten Benefits to Joining a Writing Group

I have been a member of a writing group for thirteen years. When I joined the group there were six members. We have grown to as many as fifteen members at a meeting. We have about 8 members per meeting. I never miss a meeting if I can help it. I schedule my life around these formal sessions where we write from prompts and share our work. We choose to focus on positive feedback. Full critiquing can be done outside the group.

The benefits I have gleaned from this group are plentiful.

1. Discipline and Motivation. If I don't get any writing done at home, at least I know I will at writing group. What I write from the prompts spurs on my muse and makes me strive to write more. I have actually created a whole novel from what I have written from prompts.
2. Reading Aloud. You can better hear your work when you read it aloud. You can read something to yourself over and over again and not see that typo turning a 40-foot sailboat into a 4-foot sailboat. In reading aloud you hear whether the words flow. Reading aloud also prepares you for that book launch you hope to have one day where you will have to speak in front of people, and that includes reading from your book.
3. Input From Other Writers. Comments and suggestions from others can be invaluable. You don't necessarily need to follow their advice, but it gives you something else to think about. If you hear the same advice from several different people they may have a valid point, but if you hear it from only one, take it with a grain of salt. I gave my manuscript to one of my group members. She pointed out some discrepancies as well as several questions left unanswered. When you have been working on a novel for a couple of years, you may not notice these things. It is even better if you have a grammar expert in the group.
4. Learning and Growing as a Writer. Some members in our group had never written a poem in their life. One poetry session brought to life the poet hidden within. I never thought I could write short stories; I learned that I can and am

actually good at it - good enough to have one published in a local magazine.

5. Connections. We have a few published authors in our group. They are able to steer us in the right direction when it comes to being published. They do not hesitate to share their experiences with us - the good and the bad. They also make great recommendations.
6. Time. When you attend a writing group you are making time to write. There are many distractions at home, on the internet, and in life in general. I go to my writing group and leave behind the bickering children, ringing phone, emails, and the ever-present laundry.
7. Opportunities. Since I joined the writing group I have been made aware and taken advantage of many opportunities that I would never have found on my own. We had a short story author come to our group to do a workshop. We studied other authors' works, wrote our own shorts, and brainstormed ideas for each other. I have attended seminars by published, award-winning authors and have even had the honour of meeting one-on-one with authors for personal critiquing of my work as well as to learn good writing habits and how to get published.
8. Support and Encouragement. Family members tend to look down at writing as not being a real job. We all need people who believe in us, who will encourage us to keep at it and support every writing endeavour. When you do get published you can be sure that your writing buddies will be first in line to purchase your book.
9. Creative Energy. There is something about a group of writers in a room bringing out the creative muse in all of us. In our group we usually have a list of prompts to choose from. We write for ten minutes with no idea which prompt each person chose. When we share our writing it is amazing to see a common thread running through every member's piece of writing. Where there are writers there is creativity.
10. Friendship. I have made many friends through the writing group, especially those in the writing group. As a

stay-at-home mother of two daughters, getting to know people with common interests and goals gives more meaning to my life.

If you are serious about your writing I highly recommend you find a writing group to join. If there isn't one in your area start one of your own by posting notices in the library, local bookstore, or even in the newspaper. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain, including the means and motivation to achieve your dream of becoming a published writer - and you'll have fun doing it.