



# YOUNG WRITERS GUIDEBOOK

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM YOUNG AUTHORS  
WHO HAVE GONE AHEAD OF YOU

**BRETT HARRIS**

# INTRODUCTION

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Hello, young writer. My name is **Brett Harris** and I'm the author of *Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations*.

Let me get right to the point: I believe teens can get published. And with the right guidance (and a lot of hard work) I believe *you* can get published.

I published my first book as a teenager and I've seen many other young writers do the same. For this ebook I contacted eight of them and asked them what they'd say to aspiring young writers.

I pray you'll be deeply encouraged and inspired by what they have to share with you.

*Your Brother in Christ,*

*Brett Harris*  
1 Tim 4:12

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# LEAH E. GOOD

**Started Writing Seriously:** Age 14 | **Published Her First Book:** Age 19

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Being a young writer comes with challenges. But it also comes with unique opportunities. If we want to succeed we must take advantage of our youth, rather than using it as an excuse.

**Leah E. Good** released her first novel, *Counted Worthy*, at age 19 and is busy working on a sequel. She reminds young writers that they possess what many older writers lack: the gift of wonder.



## TIP NO. 1: Don't be ashamed of your youth.

“As a young writer, you might feel you have many obstacles to overcome because of your age. It's true. But you also have something many older writers lack. As a young writer, the world is filled with potential and opportunities to explore—with wonder and excitement. You might not have the life experience or technical skill of your older counterparts, but

skills can be learned—learned quickly by an eager young mind. As Paul once told Timothy, don't let anyone look down on your youth. As a member of several online communities of creative people, I constantly see people who have been writing for years saying that they need to step back and rediscover the wonder they once felt in storytelling. That wonder is fresh for you. Don't be ashamed of it!

If writing is your passion, throw yourself into it with the enthusiasm and abandon unique to your age group. Set goals that matter, like writing stories that honor God and impact people's lives. You might not hit the bestseller's list (or you might!), but if you write because you absolutely love it, do it for God, and devote yourself to learning your craft, you will never regret the hours spent with a notepad or word processor.

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## LEAH'S BOOK

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[www.leahgood.com](http://www.leahgood.com)

# GILLIAN BRONTE ADAMS

**Started Writing Seriously:** Age 16 | **Published Her First Book:** Age 22

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As young writers, we must overcome our fear of failure. Fear is like a cage. It holds us back from putting words on the page. It tells us, “You’re too young and unskilled.”

**Gillian Bronte Adams** understands this well. She is the young author behind the speculative fantasy novels *Orphan’s Song*, *Songkeeper*, and *Out of Darkness Rising*. May her words set you free.



## TIP NO. 2: Don’t be caged by fear of failure.

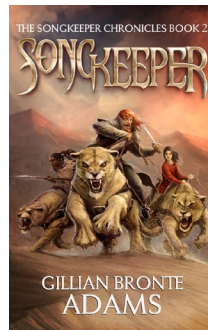
“Don’t be caged by fear of failure. Like a lot of writers, I am a perfectionist, which can be both help and hindrance. Sometimes my fear of failure keeps me from taking risks or summoning the courage to put the first words on a page. New ideas seem pristine until transformed into ink, and then I stare, horrified, at the sticky, unseemly mass that remains.”

In times like those I feel incredibly young and unskilled. I imagine you sometimes feel the same. And the truth is, you are young. And so am I. There are things we have not yet experienced, skills we have not yet mastered, and tales we cannot yet begin to tell to the fullest. We will look back on our writings in a year and wonder how something that once seemed so beautiful and grand can now seem so small.

But it will always be so, and that is the beauty of this life we have chosen. There is always room to grow. We are redwoods reaching for the sky. But we cannot succeed without perseverance, and perseverance is won through heartache, brokenness, and pain. So break through the cage of fear and embrace the glorious, wild mess of this creative life. You may “fail,” but if you stand firm and try again, in the end, it will be just another tale to tell along the way.

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## GILLIAN'S BOOKS



[www.gillianbronteadams.com](http://www.gillianbronteadams.com)

# ALEX HARRIS

**Started Writing Seriously:** Age 14 | **Published His First Book:** Age 19

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Maybe you love to write but don't really want to pursue writing as a career. Does that mean writing is a distraction? Should you set it aside and focus on other things? Absolutely not.

My twin brother, **Alex Harris**, wrote seriously in high school, then turned his attention to law and government. He recently made *Forbes 30 Under 30* and credits writing for helping get him there.

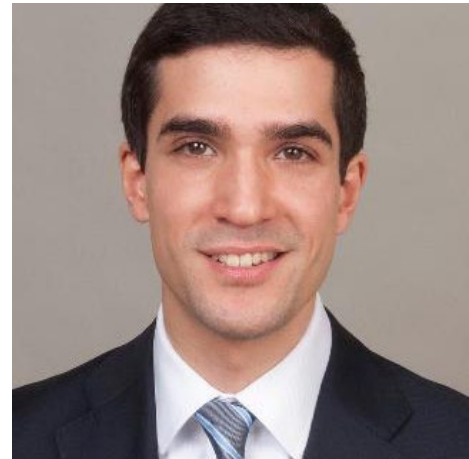


Photo Credit: Forbes Magazine

## TIP NO. 3: Take your writing seriously.

“Taking writing seriously as a young person can turn into a career path. Just look at Brett and the other young authors featured here. But it can also serve as a launching pad into seemingly unrelated fields. In my case, law and government. Starting a successful blog and publishing a book as a teenager boosted my college applications. And when it came time to apply

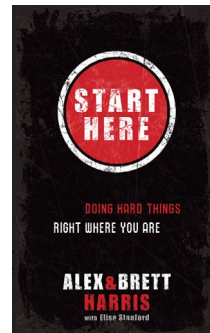


to law schools, my writing experience again helped me stand out from the crowd.

Today I'm a lawyer and most of what I do involves writing. A lot of people think lawyers spend their time arguing in front of judges and juries. And some lawyers do that. But for many lawyers their primary form of advocacy is the written word: motions, briefs, memos, even opinions. To put it another way, they come to work and write all day! So take your writing seriously. It can take you anywhere. Even if you don't make writing books your career.

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## ALEX'S BOOKS



[www.therebelution.com](http://www.therebelution.com)

# JAQUELLE CROWE

**Started Writing Seriously:** Age 11 | **Published Her First Book:** Age 19

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**Y**ou want to be a writer? Then you've got to write. Great writers write consistently. They've learned that writing is a discipline.

**Jaquelle Crowe** published over 1,000 posts on her personal blog before making it big. Now she writes for *Desiring God* and *The Gospel Coalition*. Her first book, *This Changes Everything: How the Gospel Transforms the Teen Years*, releases in March.



## TIP NO. 4: Consistency is critical.

“ Consistency is critical. The discipline of writing regularly is one of the most valuable habits a writer can develop. It strengthens writing, compels creativity, promotes problem-solving and self-criticism, and teaches perseverance and patience. It's the monotonous (and unglamorous) rhythm of writing over and over again that serves as a catalyst for shaping strong, long-term writers.

## TIP NO. 5: You are what you read.

“Read good books. Nutritionists say, “You are what you eat.” Writers say, “You are what you read.” The caliber of your writing is directly proportional to the caliber of your reading. If you waste your reading on primarily weak and sloppy books (or, worse, don’t read at all!), you will learn weak and sloppy writing. You will miss out on the writer’s greatest tool: good books. We have thousands of brilliant wordsmiths to choose from. Take advantage of them!

### JAQUELLE'S WRITING



[www.jaquelle.ca](http://www.jaquelle.ca)

# JAYE L. KNIGHT

**Started Writing Seriously:** Age 15 | **Published Her First Book:** Age 18

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There are a few unpopular truths English teachers everywhere don't want you to know: 1) Not all writing rules are helpful, and 2) Many successful writers break those rules.

**Jaye L. Knight** has earned the right to break the rules. Her award-winning *Ilyon Chronicles* have won fans around the world, but she encourages you to write for God and not to please others.



## TIP NO. 6: Not all rules are helpful.

“One of the biggest pieces of advice I could give to young writers, especially when you're still developing your writing style, is to not get too caught up writing how you believe others think you should write. There are so many rules, and do's and don'ts. By all means, do learn the rules, but one thing I've learned in my years of writing is that not all rules are that helpful.



Look at Brandon Sanderson. He's one of my all-time favorite authors. Some of his books stretch way beyond recommended word counts, and my favorite series of his began with not one, but TWO prologues. That's like taking the rules, shredding them into tiny pieces, burning them, and then throwing the ashes in an active volcano, but he did it anyway.

### **TIP NO. 7: There will always be haters.**

“ Writing is an extremely personal activity. More of you bleeds out into your work than you'll probably ever realize. That can be super scary, but because of that, only you can know in the end what your story truly needs. Writing is hard enough without weighing everything on the opinions of others and worrying about how people will view it. There will always be haters no matter how good you are. While you do want to please your readers, for me, writing comes down to only three things: me, God, and a blank page. God gave me a passion for writing, He blessed me with the ability and creativity to do it, and He made me a unique individual. When I get a story spark that I know came from Him, it shouldn't matter if that story doesn't follow the “rules”.

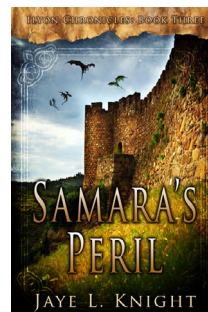
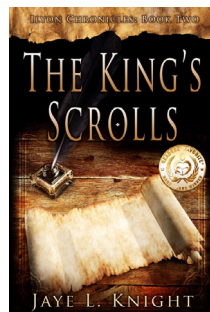
### **TIP NO. 8: Keep God at the center.**

“ I may be a bit of a rebel writer in this way, but I've been writing stories for twenty years, and have been published for ten of those years. I've had super

high points and super low points. I've struggled with writer's block, depression, anxiety, and a host of other issues. I still get scared when I release a new book. It's easy to feel that way because you are putting so much of yourself out into the world for people to judge. But I always strive to remind myself that if it's a story God gave me, and it's a story I love, then that's what matters most. Life is too short and there are far too many story ideas to waste time on a story you don't love. Write what you love, even if it means breaking a few of those writing rules or expectations. If God is at the center of it, then it's never a waste or a failure.

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## JAYE'S BOOKS



[www.jayelknight.com](http://www.jayelknight.com)

# AUSTIN GUTWEIN

**Started Writing Seriously:** Age 14 | **Published His First Book:** Age 15

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Imagine receiving an email from someone who has read a book or article you've written. "This was just what I needed to hear," they tell you. "Your words have changed my life. Thank you!"

**Austin Gutwein** has had this experience. And he believes you can too. His books, *Take Your Best Shot* and *Live to Give* are about using your talents to serve others—and that's his challenge to you today.



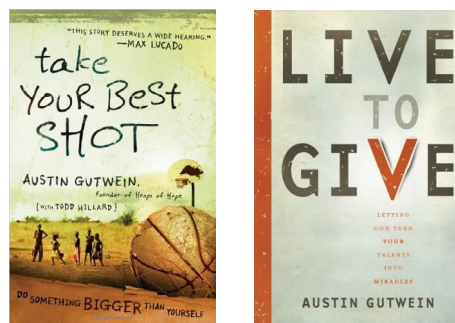
## TIP NO. 9: God wants to use your words.

“Writing is by far the most powerful tool you have to communicate your thoughts, ideas, and dreams with the world. If you are someone thinking about writing, my encouragement to you is: the world needs you. So many of us stop writing because of fear of rejection rather than realizing that the very words we are so hesitant to write may be the words God will use to speak life into another person. So get those words on the page!”

## TIP NO. 10: Start where you are.

“If you know you should write but don’t know quite where to start, start where you are. Write about what you are passionate about and write from your heart. Let God worry about the results and just be faithful to write whatever you feel He has laid on your heart to write. I am so excited to see the amazing young authors that will come along after me. I want to be the first one to buy your work! And who knows? Perhaps generations from now, they’ll still be reading your thoughts, ideas, and dreams.

### AUSTIN'S BOOKS



[www.austingutwein.com](http://www.austingutwein.com)



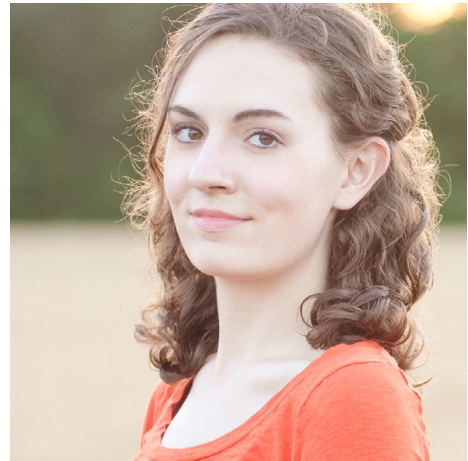
# RACHEL COKER

**Started Writing Seriously:** Age 11 | **Published Her First Book:** Age 16

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Deciding what to write about is one of the biggest challenges for writers. How do we find ideas? How do we know what people will want to read? These questions can paralyze us.

**Rachel Coker** has some practical advice. She wrote her first novel, *Interrupted*, at fourteen and saw it published by Zondervan two years later. Her second novel, *Chasing Jupiter*, followed soon after.



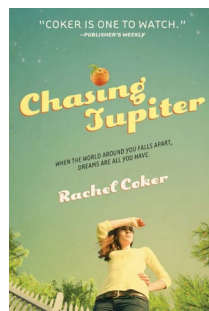
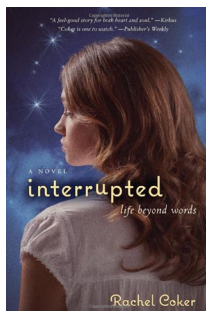
## TIP NO. 11: Keep track of what inspires you.

“Just look around you. Everywhere you look you’ll find movies, books, and people that intrigue you. Keep track of those things, because those are the things that inspire you. And when you’re inspired, it’s much easier to write. Keep a notebook with you. Keep your eyes open. Listen. Talk to people. Talk to strangers. And you’ll always find things that are worth writing about.”

## TIP NO. 12: Write as if it's just for you.

“Write everything as if it's just for you. And if it's meaningful enough, then it will be meant for everyone. Your writing has to be deeply personal and important to you. It has to be risky to share with others in order for it to actually impact other people. It can't be safe. It can't be easy to share. It has to mean something to you, or it won't mean anything to anyone.

### RACHEL'S BOOKS



[www.rachelcoker.com](http://www.rachelcoker.com)

# WHAT'S YOUR SCORE?

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Take the *WriterScore Assessment* and discover what you're doing well—and what's holding you back in your development as a writer.

**Are you a Dreamer, Starter, Planner, or Achiever?** Your WriterScore will help you determine exactly what your next steps should be. Take the assessment here:

