

## **The Retype Draft**

TLC has asked for contributions to help writers feel happy, healthy and creative during this strange time of social distancing and isolation, and now I'm feeling a bit of a killjoy because what I want to suggest might at first sound quite tedious:

I'd like you to retype a draft of a manuscript-in-progress.

This could seem a chore, no fun at all, but it can really help in flushing out the clutter and clunk of a previous draft, or perhaps help reboot an old project. You wrote that earlier draft in another time, after all, and you're a new person now, with fresh perspectives and attitudes that, however subtly, might make themselves felt in the writing.

And besides, if you are currently, shall we say, limited in your geography and also have some extra time on your hands, this might be the perfect time to take on this task. Just put yourself on autopilot, be purposeful, and: *go!*

### **A few tips and suggestions:**

- You could try retyping at an earlier stage of drafting, e.g., after doing a structural edit on an initial draft of a manuscript. If you've been cutting and pasting, moving material around and inserting new text, there might be a real value in smoothing out whatever you have now.
- You could also try this at a later stage of drafting, e.g., after line editing, as a way of polishing your writing. It's likely that you will catch slips you have missed, and rekeying text also makes you question the value of every last word.
- If you have access to a printer, it can help to make a printout, read that through, perhaps making notes and light edits, and maybe even reading it aloud. Then you can copy-type it out into a new document.

- When making a printout, you can make the writing seem fresh if you change the typeface to one you don't usually use. You might even want to print it out looking like a book, e.g., landscape, two columns/'pages' per page of your printout, single-spaced and justified, and in a bookish typeface such as Garamond or Baskerville. Don't forget to paginate, too.

Many writers will testify to the great value of this exercise, and some writers initially horrified by the idea later testify that [it takes far less time than they imagined](#), and also state that the Retype Draft was the draft where the book really came together with depth and clarity. It helps, I feel, that story is usually retyped (or shall I say recomposed?) in the order in which it will be read.

Sometimes, I simply feel it is immensely liberating for writers to free themselves of the computer and the endless loop of scrolling up and down on screen.

I've blogged about the Retype Draft in an entry on my blog called ['Putting It Through The Typewriter Again'](#).

And if you're still not sure, think about all the photos you've seen of [writers working on typewriters](#) in the olden days. If they could retype their drafts, so can we.

**Andrew Wille** is an editor, writer and teacher with a particular interest in contemplative and intuitive approaches to writing and creativity. He lives in London, and shares resources on writing and publishing, including plenty of writing experiments, at [www.wille.org](http://www.wille.org).