

# WRITERLY WIT\*



**ALWAYS**

**HELPFUL.**

**\*SOMETIMES WITTY.**

**WITH DEINA FURTH**  
Author, blogger, podcaster, human.

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## Writerly Wit with Deina Furth

### *Episode 3: Creating Your Author Platform*

Hi, everyone, and welcome to the second episode of the Writerly Wit podcast, with your host—I'm Deina Furth.

Last time, we talked about getting your social media posts in order and finding ways to cut down on your workload. It was a bunch of technical jargon, so I'm sorry if it was a little bit confusing for some of you.

**I've mentioned a few times now that a big part of being an indie writer nowadays is being able to build your "author platform."**

The author platform can be simple, or it can be very complex. If you've never heard the term before, don't worry. I'm going to talk about which social media networks are the most popular and go over their uses a little bit, and I'm going to talk a little bit about blogging too. I know that indie authors come from various backgrounds, and no one's experience is exactly the same, so maybe some of these things will not appeal to you.

So take everything I say with a grain of salt. **Feel free to use anything you think might help you, and if something doesn't really sound like your style, no worries**—there are lots of ways to approach building your personal author platform.

## Twitter

**I'm starting with Twitter because I feel like it's been the most helpful to me in terms of finding the support of other indie authors and readers who will engage.**

If you're not on Twitter already, I'm going to break down a few reasons why I feel like authors can really benefit from the platform. I'll follow up with a few tips on how you can make managing your presence on Twitter a little bit easier.

### **1. Twitter is easy to set up.**

**When you sign up, choose a name that represents your author brand.** If you're able, just use your name as it appears in print. This is because when people search for your name, Google/Bing/Yahoo will pull up your results more easily. If you choose a name that doesn't really match your brand, the search engines are going to have a tougher time associating that brand with your Twitter profile.

**To use Twitter properly, you must fill out your profile *completely*.** This includes a “profile pic”. When you sign up, there will be a photo of a little egg as the default picture. You do not want to leave that. In Twitterland, as you'll quickly discover, eggs are basically shorthand for spammers. Most people won't bother following eggs, nor will they follow them back if an egg follows them. So take three seconds and upload a picture—even if it's just a picture of one of your books or a pretty butterfly. Doesn't matter, as long as it's not an egg!

**Choose a header image that really stands out.** In my profile, I have a picture of my books. You can do the same, or you could put a quote from a review or an advertisement for an upcoming project.

**Fill out your profile information completely.** You have space for a bio, location, and link to your website. Use your bio to direct people to Amazon if you prefer. For example, in my profile, I talk about which genres I write in and I include a link to Amazon so curious visitors can check out my books. Bonus if you use hashtags (the little pound sign or hash key—or 'octothorpe', for you grammarians out there!) This allows people searching for hashtags and topics to find your profile, making it easier for them to follow you based on interests.

## **2. It's easy to learn Twitter.**

You only have 140 characters to work with. You must keep your tweets short and sweet. It takes a bit of practice to get good at it—I mean, **there is a strategy involved with tweeting**, if you want to get the most out of it—but all in all, it's really easy to catch on.

## **3. There are LOTS of authors on Twitter, most of whom are kind and helpful.**

I was shocked at the close-knit author community that I found when I signed up for Twitter. **Authors follow other authors. They retweet other authors.** They promote and support one another. And that's great. Too often, people are scared of doing that because it means more attention for the competition, but authors are a different breed.

## **4. It doesn't take long to build a small following.**

The thing about Facebook is that you kind of have to have an audience to actually get mileage out of it. Sure, you can always find new fans through Facebook, or by advertising through Facebook, but you're more than likely going to get people who are already your fans finding you on Facebook and “liking” your page.

With Twitter, that's not the case. You can follow people every day and many will follow you back. If you keep working on growing your following, you'll get a lot more followers on Twitter than you would on Facebook. And it doesn't take long at all.

### **5. Twitter isn't time-consuming.**

Well, it can be if you get addicted to it, like any social media network. But honestly, you can handle your Twitter account in 15 minutes a day once you have it down to a science. Find a few new people to follow every day, send a few tweets, retweet interesting things, and respond to anyone who has engaged with you. Voila, you're done.

## **Facebook**

**Facebook isn't really my favorite platform, but it's still widely used, and there's still a really supportive author community using it, so I think it's worth it.**

Plus, Facebook allows you to read through information more thoroughly than you could on Twitter. When someone's scrolling through Facebook, they take in more information—photos, videos, even text—than they would on Twitter, based on the length of the post alone. The average lifespan of a Tweet, according to a Moz study, is 18 minutes.

**Facebook posts last longer, with peak engagement happening at around 5 hours.**

Now, here are my reasons I think some authors might benefit from Facebook:

### **1. Facebook is easy to learn.**

This is because *pretty much everyone has been on Facebook by this point.*

**Now, the only thing I'd warn you to watch out for is pages versus profiles.**

**A Facebook PROFILE** is what you use for your personal life. It's probably what you already have. If you receive friend requests, then you have a Facebook profile.

**A Facebook PAGE** is when people can find you and “like” you—just like you would do to a business you enjoy!

So when you sign up, **make sure you direct people to your Facebook page, not your profile.** You can only have a set number of friends on your profile, and do you really want to have to approve every friend request when a fan finds you? The answer is no, no

you don't. You want them to just be able to “like” you.

After that, it's just a matter of uploading a good profile picture and header. Fill out your bio completely so that anyone who finds you knows immediately what you're all about. Use the space wisely, and direct people to your website or blog so that they can easily find your work.

Again, this is intuitive for most people because they already have a Facebook profile. And a page isn't all that different!

## **2. Apps and bonus pages.**

Facebook also allows you to have really cool pages attached to your profile. **You can add “apps” that direct visitors to specific pages**—your Twitter profile, your Goodreads profile, your newsletter, and more. One of the best options is to **have your newsletter embedded**. People can then sign up directly from your Facebook page. You can also install something called “Buy my Books” and set up links to go directly to your Amazon sales pages. It's like a mini-website without bothering with all the pesky coding and graphics.

## **3. Facebook groups and events.**

I've seen a lot of authors set up really cool things using Facebook groups and events. You can join groups for many purposes—to talk to other authors, to create a fan page for your book (members can then ask the author questions or share their thoughts about the book in an appropriately designated space), and **I've seen authors do book tours and even release parties this way**. Now, I'm not going to go into a huge amount of detail about that, but let's just suffice it to say that if you're really into organizing events like readings, signings, or any other parties, you might really enjoy this part of Facebook.

## **4. More people use Facebook than Twitter.**

You might find that **a lot of your fans aren't even on Twitter**. By making sure that you have an up-to-date page on Facebook, you can hook in those fans that haven't yet branched out to other social media platforms.

## **5. If you pace yourself, you can get a lot of bang for your buck.**

Facebook is pretty much universally known as a time-sink. But that doesn't have to be true.

**Posting something to Facebook really doesn't take long at all—just a few minutes.**

If you keep yourself away from Facebook during the hours you're working on writing, you'll see that it doesn't have to take up so much of your day! Just use a few minutes in the morning and evening to update, check engagement, and of course support your fellow authors. Then *you're done*.

## Pinterest

**Sometimes I feel like the only woman alive who isn't really familiar with Pinterest.**

I'm a very visually-driven person, so it would make sense that I should like Pinterest, right?

I think part of the problem for me was that I didn't really understand what good it was other than to hoard articles and pretty pictures. I didn't feel like I was accomplishing much when I was on Pinterest—I was just searching for... things, something! But I didn't know what.

**Well, I can see now how Pinterest can be of use from a marketing standpoint.**

To set up your Pinterest account, you don't have to do much at all: Just sign up with your email address and get pinning!

As an author, though, **you'll want to have a business account**. This allows you to take a peek into your analytics to see which of your pins are the most popular, where your visitors come from, and more.

To do this, you'll have to place a snippet of code in your site's header. Pinterest gives you several ways of going about this—I'm not going to cover any of this in the podcast, **but I do want you to be aware that this step is slightly different than anything you'll encounter when setting up, say, your Facebook or Twitter accounts.**

Of course, you'll have the opportunity to link to your Twitter and Facebook profiles from your Pinterest profile, as well as to your website. Upload a photo of yourself and write a quick bio, and you're done!

Now, here's how Pinterest can help.

- 1. It's incredibly beautiful.**

People are attracted to pretty things. As an author, you want someone to be drawn into your world—whether your world is sexy, gorgeous, or frightening, the **most tangible photos you use to help you visualize your settings** can really resonate with your fans.

## **2. It gives you a way to bring characters to life for your fans.**

Have you thought of a specific actor who would play your leading man? Can you imagine a heroine played by one of Hollywood's finest? I think we all can, and I think we all do that already. We all imagine our characters in a sweeping cinematic experience. **And Pinterest is perfect to bring that imagination to life.** You can create boards with images of your characters, their homes, their favorite places. All of this helps your fans connect with your story on even deeper level than they would have otherwise.

## **3. It really can be used to drive sales.**

If you put links to your books in the descriptions of your pins, they can drive people to your site. They're already interested in the pin—they clicked on it, after all—and lots of people will follow through to your site. **Make your boards an opportunity to get your fans ready to click “buy”.** Studies have shown that Pinterest offers a greater return on investment than other social media networks. At the end of the transcript, I'll provide some links in case you're interested in reading about it.

## **4. It helps with your site ranking.**

If you're into SEO (search engine optimization) at all, you'll know that backlinks help your ranking. 91% of e-commerce retailers saw a rise in their rankings thanks to social referrals. **(Not just Facebook and Twitter, etc, but pins on other sites and blogs, so they're linking back to you as well.)**

If none of this makes any sense to you, just know that the more reputable people you get linking to your stuff, the more the search engines like it.

## **5. It has high residual value.**

So when you tweet a link, how long does that stay fresh? We said earlier only 18 minutes on average. The average Facebook post lasts only an hour or so.

**Pinterest is different.** Pins have a better chance of being seen because when your fans re-pin, everyone who follows that board will see the pin at the top at the top of their screens. **The more people who repin your pins, the longer the spike in traffic will**

**last.**

To give a specific article or link a boost again if your re-pins have trailed off, just re-pin it a month down the road. Voila. Also, you can let people pin directly from your blog—that way, when someone loves your work and wants to save it for later, they can easily do it with the click of a button. You'll see a spike in traffic from that, too, as the pinner's followers begin to repin the link.

## Google Plus

All right all right, I'm going to give you a few minutes to make jokes about empty rooms and how G+ is the loner of social media networks and all that.

Now that you're done, consider this:

**Google is the most widely-used search engine. G+ is Google's little baby.**

Let's think about that for a minute.

Google is pushing this social network pretty hard, and it's actually growing at a tremendous rate.

**Hashtags help Google recognize the content contained within your posts and your links.** The text and photos in your posts will be associated with your Google profile.

You'll also notice that if people are sharing your content and giving it +1's (G+'s version of "likes"), **Google will think your content is more relevant.** There's a ton of science that goes into the Google ranking algorithm, obviously, and I'm not going to go into too much of that here. But let's just say that G+ is helpful because Google wants you to use it. *That's reason enough for it to be relevant!*

Setting up your Google Plus account is more difficult than the other networks, in my opinion. Sometimes Google's settings can be convoluted and irritating to work around.

**But as with all the other sites, make sure you have clear, professional photos, a bio, and links to relevant social media networks and profiles.**

If you use G+ for nothing else besides sharing your posts, so be it. But there are two other things that I think are worth mentioning about Google Plus:



## 1. It's now connected to YouTube.

Your Google Plus profile is now linked to your YouTube account. Anything that you watch on YouTube and share or comment on will be then tied to your Google profile. It's worth noting, even if you're not on YouTube.

## 2. You get Google Hangouts.

Google Hangouts is a way to stream live video and then record it for later playback. You can even add multiple users and use it as a type of conference call.

**Lots of authors use Google Hangouts to do book reviews and live readings.** You can use it for interviews or to record yourself for vlogging purposes. It's really reliable and versatile, and you're not going to find this with any other social media network aside from YouTube.

## Goodreads

I think most authors are probably already on Goodreads, but I've only just joined.

To be honest, it really freaked me out at first. It seemed way too complicated. And of course, it was yet another social media site for me to maintain, and a person's time only stretches so far.

### 1. Signing up is time-consuming, but the community is supportive and helpful.

When you sign up, you can create a profile with links back to your site. **There is a great guide by fantasy author Michael J. Sullivan that walks you through writing a killer profile** and includes steps to embed icons and links for your social media profiles in the description (Goodreads does not support this in their UI). Michael was really friendly when I spoke to him, and I have to give him a shout-out and say that I really appreciated the guide he took the time to compose. Please check it out if you'd like to set up your Goodreads profile. It's worth it, I promise, and there are links in the transcript.

Now, as an author, the great thing about Goodreads is that you can pull reviews from all over Goodreads and people will be able to see them in one spot. People can then add your books to their shelves with one click. **It's pretty much the Pinterest/Facebook lovechild for readers and writers.**

You do have to be approved by Goodreads to be an author. When you set up your account, you'll get the option to do so, and they'll give you step-by-step instructions.

## **2. There are some great advertising options.**

If you have print books, Goodreads has options for you to run ads and promote your work. If you have ebooks... tough cookies.

I haven't used any of the advertising options since all my books are currently ebooks. But I know other authors have had good things to say about their advertising options, and if you're a print author, you might want to check it out and see if it'd be helpful to you.

## **3. Groups are highly interactive.**

Again, I haven't been a member of Goodreads for too long. **But I can see that groups here are highly active and members connect regularly.** Whether an author wants to hold a Q & A (Goodreads also supports that straight from your author page) or discuss ideas with fans, you'll be able to find it in a group.

## **Blogging**

In the last episode, I mentioned that some authors really love blogging and others don't.

If you're like me and really hate blogging, then I won't tell you to start.

**I truly believe that, if you put enough effort into other social media networks, you can create an author platform without having to slave away at the keyboard for hours, writing posts you don't really care about.**

This January, though, I made a commitment to creating lots of content during 2015. I hope that it is good quality content, and I'm going to try to get consistently better. But when I made that decision, I included blogging as well as podcasting and creating videos.

The reason I did that was because I feel like all the authors who I admire already blog. I feel more connected to them because of it. I feel like I knew them better.

**And I want people to feel that way about me, too.**

So for me, I've now made a transition into more frequent blogging.

It's up to you whether you choose to blog. But I think that there are some bonuses that come along with it—finding a niche, getting practice writing, and connecting with fans on a level that you wouldn't otherwise.

**It also serves as a central hub so your fans can branch out and contact you on the social media network of their choice.**

So you can see why it's a good idea for some people!

## Making videos and podcasting

**Not everyone learns by reading.** Some of your visitors might even be blind—they will want to listen to audiobooks and enjoy hearing you speak about your books in videos or on a podcast.

If you choose to do sound/video media, **you should know that this is a lot of work.** It's not like Twitter and Facebook, where you can send a quick update out into the world and then let it go.

I'm a bit of a perfectionist, so I might take longer than others, but the time it takes me to write a podcast script, record it, edit it, and get it uploaded is immense. **This is about a day's worth of time for me.** I might get faster as time goes on, but I think the point still holds—if you want a quality product, you have to take your time producing it.

And of course that all takes time away from writing.

So if you've got the time or would like to make time to do this, good on you! It's a great way to reach a section of your audience you might not otherwise have reached.

**If not, don't sweat it.** You can still build a completely well-rounded platform without these things.

## After You've Built Your Platform

Even after all that, there are *still more* social media platforms that people use.

Tumblr is a big one, but I'm not on Tumblr. YouTube is also its own platform.

Some people use visual platforms like Instagram and Vine.

Others use text-based sites like Quora or Reddit.

Traditional media can also be a great resource if you tap into it! Radio interviews, phone interviews, newspaper articles. That sort of thing.

### **It's all about how you feel comfortable and how far you want (or can) stretch yourself.**

If I were to give a set of instructions to a new author looking to make a name for him or herself, I'd say:

- **Choose at least 2 social media networks** you feel comfortable with and update them regularly.
- **Create a central hub**—a blog or just a website—where your readers can find, follow, and contact you.
- **Collect emails via newsletter sign ups** (NEVER through third-party apps!)
- **Network**, try new things, and keep at it. :)

### **Before I go, I'm going to leave you with a quote:**

*"First drafts don't have to be perfect. They just need to be written."*

Not sure who said it, but this is something we should all keep in mind as we build our platforms. You don't have to be perfect to get started. **We all start somewhere.** And getting started is the only way to reach your goals!

In the meantime, you can email me with questions or comments at [deina.furth@gmail.com](mailto:deina.furth@gmail.com).

Be sure to visit my site, <http://deinafurth.com/>, and check out **The Short Story and Flash Fiction Society** at <http://www.shortstoryflashfictionsociety.com/> and see what Mary Papas and I have put up there this week. If you're in need of some ideas to get started

writing, we've definitely got plenty of prompts and ideas for you there!

**So until next time, this is Deina Furth with Writerly Wit, and I'll see you soon!**

*Studies mentioned in the podcast:*

- <http://moz.com/blog/when-is-my-tweets-prime-of-life>
- <http://www.postplanner.com/lifespan-of-facebook-posts/>
- <http://digiday.com/brands/15-interesting-stats-social-shopping/>
- <http://searchenginewatch.com/sew/how-to/2307518/google-seo-how-google-impacts-search-results>

**Michael J Sullivan's Goodreads Profile Guide:** [http://michaelsullivan-author.com/icon\\_setup.pdf](http://michaelsullivan-author.com/icon_setup.pdf)