

# Elmore Leonard Quotes

*Writing, Book, Thinking, Want, Character, Fun, Stories, Sound, Two, Reader,  
Use, Verbs, Believe, People, Narrative, Guy, Reading, Block, Worry, Trying*

I spent most of my dough on booze, broads and boats and the rest I wasted.

~Elmore Leonard

My most important piece of advice to all you would-be writers: when you write, try to leave out all the parts readers skip.

~Elmore Leonard

If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it. Or, if proper usage gets in the way, it may have to go. I can't allow what we learned in English composition to disrupt the sound and rhythm of the narrative.

~Elmore Leonard

The line of dialogue belongs to the character; the verb is the writer sticking his nose in.

~Elmore Leonard

What do you tell a man with two black eyes? Nothing, he's already been told twice.

~Elmore Leonard

It doesn't have to make sense, it just has to sound like it does.

~Elmore Leonard

Using adverbs is a mortal sin.

~Elmore Leonard

At the time I begin writing a novel, the last thing I want to do is follow a plot outline. To know too much at the start takes the pleasure out of discovering what the book is about.

~Elmore Leonard

Everyone has his own sound. I'm not going to presume how to tell anybody how to write.

~Elmore Leonard

Try not to write the parts that people skip.

~Elmore Leonard

All the information you need can be given in dialogue.

~Elmore Leonard

I do have fun writing, and a long time ago, I told myself, 'You got to have fun at this, or it'll drive you nuts.'

~Elmore Leonard

Not dreams but night changes, not destiny but path changes, always keep your hopes alive, luck may or may not change, but time definitely changes.

~Elmore Leonard

If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it.

~Elmore Leonard

Keep your exclamation points under control. You are allowed no more than two or three per 100,000 words of prose.

~Elmore Leonard

There are some people who have been reading me for years, and they keep saying kind things about the writing. That's what you're writing for, to get people to respond to it.

~Elmore Leonard

A man can be in two different places and he will be two different men. Maybe if you think of more places he will be more men, but two is enough for now.

~Elmore Leonard

I always felt, you don't have a good time doin crime, you may as well find a job.

~Elmore Leonard

My most important rule is one that sums up the 10: If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it.

~Elmore Leonard

I don't want the reader to be aware of me as the writer.

~Elmore Leonard

Avoid prologues: they can be  $\hat{A}$ -annoying, especially a prologue  $\hat{A}$ -following an introduction that comes after a foreword.

~Elmore Leonard

I'm not going to write for posterity. I'm going to write to make a buck.

~Elmore Leonard

If work was a good thing, the rich would have it all and not let you do it.

~Elmore Leonard

I don't judge in my books. I don't have to have the antagonist get shot or the protagonist win. It's just how it comes out. I'm just telling a story.

~Elmore Leonard

Never open a book with weather. There are exceptions. If you happen to be Barry Lopez, who has more ways to describe ice and snow than an Eskimo, you can do all the weather reporting you want.

~Elmore Leonard

Skip the boring parts.

~Elmore Leonard

I have fun writing. I don't make it a chore. I don't have to struggle with it.

~Elmore Leonard

After 58 years you'd think writing would get easier. It doesn't. If you're lucky, you become harder to please. That's all right, it's still a pleasure.

~Elmore Leonard

I try to leave out the parts readers skip.

~Elmore Leonard

A pen connects you to the paper. It definitely matters.

~Elmore Leonard

Never use a verb other than "said" to carry dialogue... I once noticed Mary McCarthy ending a line of dialogue with "she asseverated" and had to stop reading and go to the dictionary.

~Elmore Leonard

I don't believe in writer's block or waiting for inspiration. If you're a writer, you sit down and write.

~Elmore Leonard

My characters have to talk, or they're out. They audition in early scenes. If they can't talk, they're given less to do, or thrown out.

~Elmore Leonard

I used to be able to write five pages a day, every day, no problem. Now a good day is five or four pages, and that's from 9:30 A.M. until 6 P.M.

~Elmore Leonard

I don't think writers compete, I think they're all doing separate things in their own style.

~Elmore Leonard

I still read Hemingway. I still read his short stories because they're so

good. He doesn't waste any words.

~Elmore Leonard

I started out of course with Hemingway when I learned how to write. Until I realized Hemingway doesn't have a sense of humor. He never has anything funny in his stories.

~Elmore Leonard

Don't worry about what your mother thinks of your language.

~Elmore Leonard

I once saw Dizzy Gillespie at a live show, and it made me want to go home immediately and start writing.

~Elmore Leonard

Never use the words 'suddenly' or 'all hell broke loose.'

~Elmore Leonard

It's my attempt to remain invisible, not distract the reader from the story with obvious writing.

~Elmore Leonard

There are 500 million people on Facebook, but what are they saying to each other? Not much.

~Elmore Leonard

I want the reader to know what's going on. So there's never a mystery in my books.

~Elmore Leonard

To me, writing is the most fun. It's not always fun, but finally when you make it come out the way you want, it's then you can say, 'It's fun, boy.'

~Elmore Leonard

Bad guys are not bad guys twenty-four hours a day.

~Elmore Leonard

I got halfway through 'The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.' I don't get it at all. What's the big thrill? It's boring.

~Elmore Leonard

I don't get in a position to be frightened. I don't do anything dangerous, and I always pay my bills.

~Elmore Leonard

My purpose is to entertain and please myself. I feel that if I am entertained, then there will be enough other readers who will be entertained, too.

~Elmore Leonard

I never see my bad guys as simply bad. They want pretty much the same thing that you and I want: they want to be happy.

~Elmore Leonard

There's nothing like work to take your mind off your worries.

~Elmore Leonard

Really, when I write a book I'm the only one I have to please. That's the beauty of writing a book instead of a screenplay.

~Elmore Leonard

These are rules I've picked up along the way to help me remain invisible when I'm writing a book, to help me show rather than tell what's taking place in the story.

~Elmore Leonard

I won't read a book that starts with a description of the weather. I don't read books over 300 pages, though I'll make an exception for Don

Delillo.

~Elmore Leonard

I don't believe in writer's block. I don't know what that is. There are just certain little areas that I know I'm going to get through. It's just a matter of finding a way.

~Elmore Leonard

Never use a verb other than 'said' to carry dialogue.

~Elmore Leonard

I get letters. I get several a week, I think. A lot of people want a picture, a lot of people just want an autograph.

~Elmore Leonard

I don't have any of the modern stuff. I don't have e-mail. I don't have a computer!

~Elmore Leonard

To me, a book is a book, an electronic device is not, and love of books was the reason I started writing.

~Elmore Leonard

I left advertising as fast as I could in 1961. And I haven't ever thought about going back.

~Elmore Leonard

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