

## DEVELOPING A GOOD IMAGINATION

Cherish your imagination. It's the most crucial tool you have as a writer. Without it, how are you going to visualise those stories, not to mention all the rich details that bring them to life? When I started off writing, I found it much harder to get and develop ideas, but the more I worked on it, the more those ideas started flowing. So . . .

### 1. Feed your imagination!

What stimulates ideas for you? We're all different, so you need to work out what helps you. For me, as a writer of historical novels, it's often the research books that start me thinking about putting a heroine in a certain situation. I also find I need regular feeds of fiction, so I read about three novels a week. Some people get ideas from interacting with other people, or from visiting new places. However you do it, make sure you feed your imagination regularly.

### 2. Exercise your imagination

Run story or scene ideas through your mind and set your imagination to work on them. It's like brainstorming – don't reject any idea out of hand. Give it a chance to develop and see where it might lead. The more you exercise your imagination, the stronger it'll get.

### 3. Control your imagination

Learn to turn it on when *you* need it, not just when this mythical beast called 'inspiration' strikes. Actors don't wait to be inspired to go on stage every night, and neither should writers need 'inspiring' to write. I 'trick' my imagination into starting up by following the same routine every time before I begin to write. I play a few games of solitaire\* on the computer, then I start writing my current story. After my midday meal, I play a few more games of solitaire again before I continue writing. In other words, I have developed a routine that suits me and that starts the creative juices flowing. (Don't ask me why!) I'm a big believer in habits as shortcuts to creativity – but only *you* can find out what sort of habit suits you – a walk, a cup of coffee, watering your garden, doing a bit of meditation – anything that works!

### 4. Enjoy your imagination

It's not a chore, using your imagination – it's a pleasure! So enjoy it. And I bet the more you enjoy it, the stronger it grows.

Go for it!

*(\* I bought a suite of over 300 patience/solitaire games from [www.goodsol.com](http://www.goodsol.com), so I don't get bored by them.)*