Writer's Workshop   (D.C. Rhind http://dcrhind.ca)

<u>Writing, Writer's Block</u>: Stephen King disciplines himself to a schedule — new writing in the morning 'til lunch, rewriting a prior project after lunch. If I'm into a major area, I can write from breakfast 'til supper with no break.

    <u>Just write</u>. Writing is a process of re-writing. NEVER hand in a first draft. Read and re-read your work. Out loud is a good idea.

    <u>Writer's block</u>: Back up a few pages and read on, making edits; hopefully the flow will return. Maybe you need to back up and take your character in a different direction or have another character step in and lend a hand. Take a break; do something else for a bit. Ultimately: Just write; it'll go away.

Points for Better Writing:

<u>Point of View</u> (POV): A scene can only be seen through the eyes on one character – his thoughts, what he sees – don't describe his facial expressions unless he's looking in a mirror. (ie: "He frowned" NOT "His brow furrowed."

    Third person omniscient is considered passé by editors.

<u>Action</u>: Actions evoke emotion – short, choppy sentences convey excitement – sometimes incomplete sentences, even one word. Get the reader breathing faster!

"<u>Show; Don't Tell</u>": Avoid narrating. (ie: 3rd-person omniscient)

Show through a character's eyes what is happening, rather than just narrating it. Don't keep reminding us that a character is a wizard, a warrior, or a vampire; show/remind us through his actions. Take advantage of everyday incidences to remind us of a warrior's reflexes, a vampire's speed, or a wizard's powers.

<u>Voice</u>: Everyone speaks differently, has different ways of wording things, especially if they're from a region with unique dialect and colloquialisms. Try to give each character a unique voice. Individuals often have particular words or expressions that are habitual.

<u>Adverbs</u>: avoid them. There's always a better verb that doesn't need modifying. (The reader will get the point.)

<u>Said</u>: It's the standard word used when imparting dialogue, but can get repetitious in a long dialogue scene. Words like "injected, commented, declared, groaned, cried, screamed, muttered, jibed, quipped, snapped" often give a better picture of the mood. Remember: if a character has a unique voice, you won't need *said* or *asked*.

    If you've done half a page or more from one character, try giving a glimpse of another character before be responds — (From Bob's POV:) *Bob stared at Bill, frowning. "Are you crazy?" he blurted.* (From Bill's POV:) *He paused, noticing that Bob was frowning; then Bob blurted, "Are you crazy?"*

<u>Characters</u>: Make sure each character's motivation is clear. (Why is he doing what he does?) Few *bad guys* are truly evil, just as few *heroes* are totally good.

(*Criminal Minds*) Profile both your Antagonist and Protagonist, as well as any major supporting characters.

Give main characters problems, flaws. The more the reader relates or identifies with the character, the more they will want to read about them. As author Ben Meers said in Stephen King's <u>*Salem's Lot*</u>, "Complex characters elevate genre."

<u>Research</u>: Know your locations; know your props. Google Earth can show you the terrain of a place you've never been. Google maps can help you lay out a route to get there. If you've invented your own world, draw maps, work out climate. Consistency is vital.

Props: Google can give you info on everything from the muzzle velocity and number of bullets in a clip for a Walther PPK to who makes commercially-available cell phone jammers and the specs of how they work.

These are just the high points.
I recommend:

On Writing by Stephen King

and

The Elements of Style
by Strunk & White