

## The toolchest

Working from a home office is one of those things that will teach you - in a very Nietzsche way - whether you're able to [work effectively](#) or will just spend the day on your PlayStation.

One of the most common questions I get\* is variations on the theme of, "So, what do you use to *write*?" I think there's a base belief that a set of tools is magical, like a shaman's staff, and there's some truth to that. Why? A lot of the tools we have cost time, rather than save time. They might be cool or have nice drop shadows, but they are time vampires. Here's all you need to know about the tools I use to get shit done. Fast.

\* The *most* common question I get is, "Do you write everyday?" What, am I some kind of fucking *hobbyist*?

## Scrivener

[Scrivener](#) is my can't-live-without tool. I do all of my writing in this bad boy - it's never crashed on me, never lost work, supports automated backups, snapshots during editing, split screen, full screen backdrops, lions and tigers and bears, oh my.



Runs on Windows and OS X both - so you don't need to pick which laptop's your favourite child.

I also use the companion tool [Scapple](#) when I'm doing character relationship planning, outlining, and just generally mucking around.

*Cost: USD\$45 for Scrivener and USD\$15 for Scapple.*

## Storage, the Cloud, and Backups

I would probably end my own life - without



OneDrive

passing Go first - if I lost a manuscript. I try and distribute my content across planet Earth in such a way that if one data centre is destroyed - say, by a meteorite - I'll obviously mourn for the loss of life but be delighted that my backup regime worked.

My go-to is [OneDrive](#) for primary storage - I sync my documents there, photos, whatever. The web interface is stylish, the sharing works well, the online Office apps are pretty slick, it's got two-factor authentication, syncs on Windows and Mac, and it gives a decent chunk of storage even in the free version that's not shared with your other cloud stage (hey, Google, I'm looking at you).

I then point Scrivener at [Box](#) for backups. Box isn't quite up there for bells and whistles but excellent for vanilla storage.

Both of these also sync to my devices, including my server, so I've got on-premises and cloud backups. Because Scrivener's backup system is powered by true joy, Box contains a bunch of point-in-time backups for all my books. How all this hangs together is probably a topic by itself, but the important thing is not to rely on just one thing. Have your storage you control - and then a cloud productivity pool + backup. I've used - with success - [Drive](#) instead of OneDrive and [DropBox](#) instead of Box, if you prefer those brands.

*Cost: Free. Start there and see how much storage you really need.*

## Communications

I use Gmail with custom domains - it's fast, it works on Windows and Mac, it's got great mobile support, and the search is sublime (it'd kind of suck if it wasn't, since search is kind of Google's big thing).



Yeah, I've screwed around with all kinds of options - Office 365, Outlook.com, ISP mail, hosted mail with my platform provider, the list goes on. Gmail just seems to work better, and while it pains me that they mine my very soul for personally identifiable information, you got to admit the Devil has a pretty slick operation going on in exchange.

[Skype](#) tends to get a lot of love for real-time comms with my Writer's Coven - lots of IMs (hey, we're writers), but also video chat, screen sharing, and so on.

*Cost: Free.*



## Iron

I love - *love* - my MacBook Pro Retina. It's a 2013 model, which means it doesn't have the stupid Touch Bar or need you to buy a [bazillion dongles to connect your phone](#). The laptop runs OS X and Windows both, lasts about a year on a charge, and has a screen that you can use all day without going blind. It's a fanged beast for performance too - don't tell anyone but big chunks of my Steam library on here in case I need to demonstrate the capability of the graphics card.

For *better* portability, I pack a [Surface 3](#). Good battery life, can draw on it with the stylus, and it's lighter than air, which is a thing.

Finally, there's my phone - a trusty [iPhone SE](#). Apps, good battery life, great camera. And it's got a headphone jack. Chosen mostly for its size.

You'll note a heavy emphasis on portable tech here, and that's because creativity can happen anywhere. I have a sanctum sanctorum for quiet space, but have been known to write on the train, or at a cafe, in the garden, or even at especially boring parties.

*Cost: fucking thousands.*

## That's it

Less is more. Being creative out of a backpack is a reality. Get the right tools, the ones that save you time, and you'll thank yourself. Get the wrong tools and you'll live in a pit of despair, constantly doing minor IT maintenance until your eyes bleed and you consider self harm, just so you can feel *something*.

See you next time!

- R



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