

Freewriting

Freewriting is a practice that helps to liberate your writer's voice and connects you to the vibrant stream of creativity that lies just under the surface of our ordinary thinking.

Freewriting can be used to launch you over a writer's block, to explore painful emotional memories, and to work out problems in a longer work. It can be used for making contact with one's own unconscious.

Freewriting is a simple, structured practice that is flexible and forgiving. It can be used as the base of a writing practice, or spontaneously whenever you want to go deeper into a subject.

A good way to learn freewriting is through a 10-minute timed write.

When we freewrite, we try as much as possible to suspend judgment about what we are writing. It is an exercise in getting out of our own way. You may notice you are writing in a way that is unacceptable or foreign to what you are accustomed to. Try to simply observe the process rather than trying to interrupt it.

Here are some guidelines that can be useful:

- *Use a prompt.* If you run out of ideas before the time is up, start writing the prompt and see if a new thought arises. Go with it.
- *Set a timer.* Having a reliable timer will free you from being drawn away from what you are writing. If you are moved to, continue writing after the time has expired until you complete your thought.
- *Keep your pen moving.* Don't stop writing until the timer goes off.
- *Write quickly.* Write a little bit faster than your thought formation, even if it's a little uncomfortable. Messy handwriting is welcome.
- *Use the first word.* Don't try to think of the perfect word, just use the first word that comes to mind and go with it. Don't worry about paragraphing, subject-verb agreement or even if what you are writing makes sense. Just write.
- *Write crap.* Give yourself permission to write a really bad first draft. You can always edit it later, but this permission allows you to do something new. Try to

avoid any thoughts about what you are writing. You are just there to propel the pen.

- *Go for it.* If the first thing that pops into your mind is ridiculous, go for it. If it's violent, see where it goes. Be open to the unexpected. After all, you didn't create these thoughts, did you? Our job is to honor them, allow them to come to light.

You can also use a meta-freewrite technique to explore longer works. Look at what you've written. If a question is generated when you read it, or you are looking for a solution to a problem you see, use it as a prompt for your freewrite. Keep using it, and the questions it generates, to ask yourself to go deeper into the subject. Be open to what comes up.

Crafting prompts can be good fun, and the simplest prompts are sometimes reveal the deepest veins of meaning in our stories. If you've written something you would like to explore, use a prompt like "What this story really means..." or "What I really want to say is ..." to get at a deeper meaning.

A prompt from Natalie Goldberg that can help with your personal history explorations is "I remember..." Continue to write what comes to your memory and every time you hesitate, write again "I remember ..." and keep going.

Prospect for stories using prompts like "The most scared I ever got was when..." or "I first time I met ..." or "The most momentous trip of my life was..." or "When I was a kid we..."

If you want to develop something you're writing, look for prompts within the writing itself. What jumps out at you? What has "juice" for you when you read it? There's your next prompt. Put it at the top of your page and go for it.

Resources

<http://www.TheBookDesigner.com>

<http://www.creativitygoeswild.com>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Freewrite>

<http://web.mst.edu/~gdoty//classes/concepts-practices/free-writing.html>

<http://www.writingcoachsarah.com/free-writing-course.htm#fast>