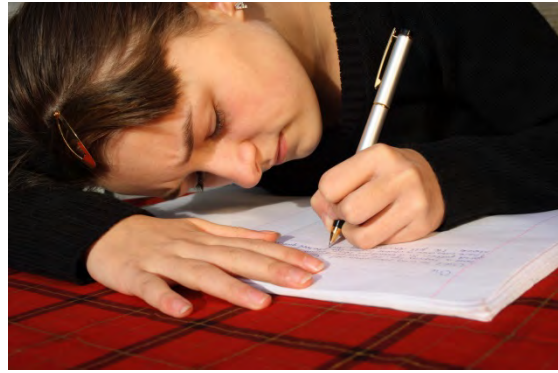


Mini-Tutorial on Creative Writing



Why Write Creatively?

- To tell stories (small, big, or novel-sized!) or capture a moment in time.
- To think through an issue (writing about something is a type of personal reflection *because* you are thinking about something as you write it).
- To escape and exercise your imagination (the sky is the limit!).
- To write songs/lyrics, stories, poetry, true-stories/life events, books, novels, short stories, etc.

How Do I Start?

- Determine a way to write that works best for you –is it by hand? On a keyboard? On a tablet? Which is the most comfortable?
- Arrange your writing environment to be comfortable (want music? Something to drink? Do you have a comfortable place to sit and work?)
- **Pre-Writing or Pre-Planning**

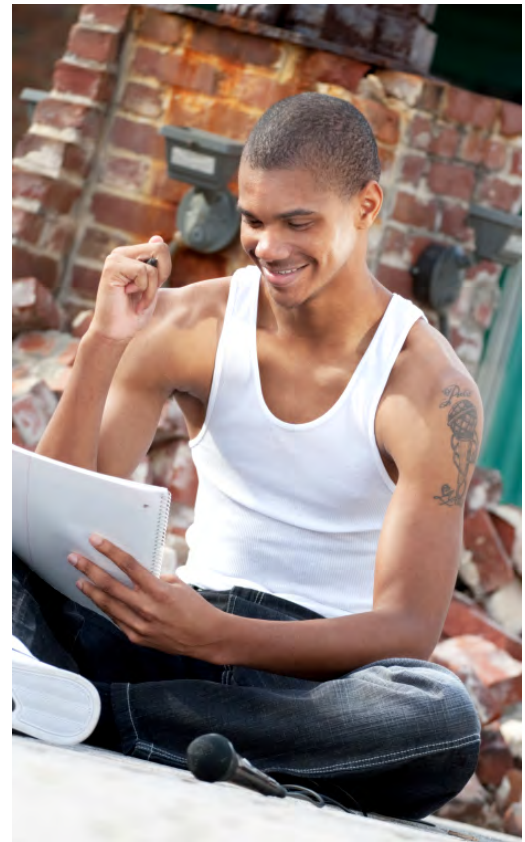
Pre-Writing // Pre-Planning

These are a few suggestions about how to get started with creative writing and exploring your ideas further. Don't worry about how messy you get!



- **Free Writing/Stream of consciousness writing:**
This is a good way to start if you already have an idea. Free writing consists of exploring an idea by writing down the idea and all the different directions you think of that involve that idea. As you write, don't worry about ordering words, sentences, spelling or punctuation, just let words, thoughts and phrases flow. The most important part of this is simply writing down the whole big mess that is in your head about the idea. Timing free writing "sessions" is a good idea, because then you are ensuring you are focused on just the one subject and exploring it. Free writing is not meant to be pretty, but it can be very useful when trying to develop or explore ideas.
- **Brainstorming:** This is another way to explore or start developing ideas. Pick words, ideas or concepts, and consider how you can expand and explore each idea or concept.

This is similar to mind-mapping, but has no firm rules—there is no limit to brainstorming except for ourselves and how far we push. A good rule of thumb is to think of three ideas from one concept, and explore each idea as thoroughly as possible. When you feel you’ve exhausted the idea, go back and cross out what is not going to work, and then **take what you have found that will work** and explore them even further. The whole point to exploring ideas this way is that you do not have to limit yourself and your exploration.



- **Shelling:** if you have the basic concept or idea established, but aren’t sure how to start exploring or planning it, find a piece of paper and write down your idea. From this, plot outwards from it with prompts like, “I want to say ..”, “I want to show/illustrate that...”, “I will demonstrate this idea by....”, or other functional questions.
- **Journalistic Questions:** Take your idea and ask questions about it such as “who” (who is involved?), “what?” (What happens or needs to happen?), “When?” (When does it occur, or need to occur?), “Why?” (Why is this important or significant?). Note your responses will act as exploration and can help you with your planning.
- **Listing or Outlining:** Compose lists of ideas, topics or subjects you want to approach or bring up—this is similar to mind-mapping as well, but is a bit more linear. Find connections between lists, and make new lists putting the most relevant pieces of information together.
- **Mind-Mapping:** Find a starting point that you would like to explore further (an idea, concept, phrase or thought), and work your way out to explore all the substance to it and see what all is there or can be connected to it.



Planning *was* messy, but I clarified my ideas. Now What?

Ordering/Outlining

- Look at your exploration notes, and start to put together your information in the order you want it to be revealed or learned.

- Consider how you will reveal it. What viewpoint will you use? Will you use one character or a couple of characters? What's the conflict?

How can you communicate your ideas in a story? What other choices about story elements will you make?

- Once you've made choices about what story elements you need (and what they will be), map out the events in a loose timeline. Having a timeline or outline is a great way to keep on track with your writing. You can always return to it to double check and see where you left off and still need to go.



Okay, this seems clearer now. Do I write now?

Begin your writing. Use your planning as a guideline or a map to refer to as you write—this will keep you on track. A few tips and tricks to keep in mind as you write are:



- Don't worry about mistakes right away. If you write something you are unsure of, make a mark beside it or a note, and come back to it later to reconsider it. Editing as you write will only slow you down, and it might throw you off track.

- Keep a thesaurus nearby. Sometimes you might want to find a new way of saying something, or use a more precise word to describe something.

- Think about your audience—how will this sound to them when they read it? Consider the effect you want to have on your audience with your words carefully. Do you want to make them pause and think, laugh, or smile? These are all things you can control with how you express yourself in writing.
- You **do not** have to write in a certain order. If you have a tough time starting, you may want to write a different part first, and make your way back to the first part. In the end, you can piece things all together properly in a second draft.

I've written my first draft, from start to finish. What next?

Now you will put some effort into making a polished copy. Consider the following to apply to the first draft:

- Edit your work. Go over it and look for spelling mistakes, funny sounding sentences, and make all the tweaks you think of that will make it writing smoother and appealing.
- Check your order, and make sure that your overall message makes sense. Have you achieved all the things you wanted to? Will it impress your audience the way you were hoping it would originally?
- After you've made all these changes, you now have your polished copy. Hand it in!

