

FREE-WRITING GUIDELINES

The technique of free-writing is one you can add to your methods of writing in your personal journal for the purposes of evoking and writing about memories, life stories, and anything that interests you.

Free-writing can be the writer/journaler's most essential practice. It is a foundation that can become a daily practice.

It is often best to write after you first wake-up, before one's inner critic has a chance to step in. Try to write every day, or at least as often as you can. You can use some of the list of prompts for evoking memories that have been provided in this workshop. You can also make up your own or seek ideas from the books provided in the bibliography.

The key to free-writing is to write *whatever comes to mind, without stopping*, for twenty minutes. (You can also set a timer for just 5 or 10 minutes, depending on how much time you have.) That's it. Write as fast as you can and don't make any changes, corrections, erase or start over. Don't correct spelling. It does not need to be coherent. Keep writing and allow whatever comes up to lead you.

Let each word be chosen, not by you, but by the preceding word or thought. Listen to what is arising by itself and put it down. Free-writing is for you alone, and it is precisely what it calls itself. *Free Writing*: without worry about what you say, how you say it, or whether it is good or not. All free-writing is good free-writing. Even if you can't think of anything to write, say that, over and over if necessary. You may stay on one topic or flip repeatedly from one topic to another. It doesn't matter. Sometimes you may produce a good record of your stream of consciousness, sometimes not. When you produce an exciting piece of writing, it doesn't mean you did better than the time before when you wrote one sentence over and over again for twenty minutes. Both times you "free-wrote" perfectly. The goal of Free-writing is *the process, not the product*.

*Adapted from Peter Elbow, *Writing with Power*, Oxford University Press, 1981

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