

What is Freewriting?

Freewriting (also called "Prolific Writing" or "Private Writing") is one of the most powerful tools you can use to develop yourself as a writer. You will find freewriting useful as a way to develop your "writing muscle," and also as a technique you can use to generate ideas at any phase you are in while working on a piece of writing. Here are the "rules" for freewriting:

- Write for ten – fifteen minutes
- Write continuously, without stopping
- Write without worrying about correctness in spelling, content, form, or subject
- Write for only your eyes (don't think about audience as you write)
- Write on any topic you wish

Very simple. The key thing about freewriting is that you don't have to worry about "doing it right." For ten minutes at a time every day (or as many days a week you choose to practice freewriting), you will write "prolifically." This prolific "freewriting" is its own kind of writing, so let me explain what I see it as. First off, you write continuously, which means you don't pause as you write. When you reach those moments when you want to stop, when you feel an overwhelming compulsion to stop, when you have written ahead of your thoughts and you don't know where or what to write next--**don't stop**. Instead of looking up and stopping, keep writing through your "empty-headedness." Just keep writing your thoughts: "Well, I don't know what to say next, my hand hurts, when is this ten minutes going to be up, I sure hope I rolled up my windows because it's raining ..." Keep your pen or pencil moving. If you are really stuck, just write the word "the" over and over again. The the the the the the the the the the the the the the Eventually, you will come back to some sort of topic.

The object in this type of writing is not at first apparent. By writing in this way we are not listening at all (as much as that is possible) to our critical side. The idea is to get used to putting our thoughts down on paper unencumbered by any critical straightjackets. We don't have to worry about the constraints of form (writing an "essay") or reaching an audience (writing for a grade). Continued practice in this type of writing helps us get down what we mean more easily. Also, you will find this kind of freewriting leads you to dialogue with yourself--to consider, evaluate, reflect upon what you think, feel, or experience. This "meta-discourse" is extremely valuable in the development of your thinking--which leads to the real hidden value of freewriting: it develops you thinking and "good thinking is the root of good writing." Although freewriting certainly can't be called "formal" writing that you might turn in for a grade to your teacher, ***you will certainly find freewriting helpful in developing your thinking and writing as you work on a more formal pieces of writing***. However, simple freewriting has intrinsic value for writing development independent of the coercion of formal writing assignments.

What is Focused Freewriting?

Focused freewriting maintains all the elements for regular freewriting, except you will try to maintain focus on a single topic or issue. Typically freewriting may bounce around to multiple topics, but focused freewriting will zero in on one subject.

*******For this assignment, focus your freewriting on the three texts for this unit: 1. *FIRESTORM* (at least up to Ch. 9), the "Ecology of Fire" article and the YouTube video of driving through the forest fire in Australia**

You can write about anything you can think of regarding these texts – what you thought, your thought process as you read/viewed, your fear, your hopes, your impatience, any of the details, your

emotional reaction to certain parts, etc. – whatever you want. Just keep focused on the a combination of these three texts, even though you may jump around to different parts or different characters, etc.*****

Although focused freewriting can be used independent of a formal writing assignment, you may find it particularly helpful as an invention tool for these assignments. The beauty of freewriting is that you will find it helpful at any stage of your writing process--*not just the beginning phase*. For instance, you could use freewriting to focus on "what you really want to say" to help find your thesis. Later in your composing process, you might do a focused freewrite on one body paragraph that is giving you particular problems developing.

Peter Elbow has been one of the chief proponents of freewriting, and he describes free writing like this: Don't stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing. If you can't think of a word or a spelling, just use a squiggle or else write, 'I can't think of it'...The easiest thing is just to put down whatever is in your mind. If you get stuck it's fine to write 'I can't think what to say, I can't think what to say' as many times as you want...the only requirement is that you never stop.

(Taken from Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing without teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press.)

Also taken from <http://www.alamo.edu/sac/english/lirvin/wguides/freew.htm>