

FREEWITING

Freewriting is a technique that has been around probably as long as writing itself. Countless creators, both well-known and never heard from, have used it to practice letting go of conscious control and strengthen the channel to the subconscious.

Dorothea Brande suggested it in her book *Becoming a Writer* in 1934. Julia Cameron popularized it for the modern mainstream in *The Artist's Way*, in which she called this practice "Morning Pages," because she suggested you do the writing first thing in the morning, as had Brande. Jack Kerouac took it to extremes, making it the basis of all the writing he did (*On the Road*, etc), and had adapted the practice directly from the trance writing of William Butler Yeats. Natalie Goldberg (*Writing Down the Bones*), adapted much of Kerouac's thoughts on the matter, and has also used it as one of her techniques in teaching writing.

Enough of the name dropping. Freewriting is valuable not only for writers and not only for artists, but for all people looking to jolt their Creative juices. Today you are going to try it.

Really there is almost nothing simpler in the world. Take out a pen or a pencil and a notebook and write.

Do not think. Do not stop. Just let your hand guide you along the page. And most important of all, for now, **DO NOT GO BACK AND READ ANY OF IT.**

It is best to write until you've completed about a thousand words, meaning about three full manuscript pages (A4 or letter). Usually this takes 20-30 minutes max if you follow the instructions.

You did not have to write something "good." No point worrying about that: neither you nor anyone else will have the chance to even judge it. The exercise is not about what you are writing, in any case. The content does not matter. Not yet. For today it is about building the ability to connect to your subconscious, and thus the flow of Creativity inside you and around you and to overcome your inner critic, censor, professor, or whatever you call it.

You are inviting your subconscious to step up and play. Ideally, it will do so today. If not, don't stress. It will soon. Yes, you are going to do this exercise tomorrow too. For a whole week, in fact, before you get into the further training. The deal is to give your subconscious a chance and then keep providing that opportunity. **THIS** is the playground you are starting with. **THIS** is the chance to prove you are trustworthy.

This exercise is not serious. And yet it is deadly serious. It is the first step in your way forward and the concrete supporting your path.

And yet it is truly the simplest thing in the world for any literate person. All you have to do is keep your hand moving. If you do that you win. If you write the same word over and over, that's great! If you heap a stream of scorn on yourself ("I can't write anything this is so stupid I have no interesting thoughts, I wish I was eating ice cream, why did that jerk give

me this exercise I'm not a writer I need go do real work my kids are going to wake up who do i think i am i'm not creative bla bla bla bla bla bla bla) that's fine too!

Write whatever comes out and stop when you wrote a thousand words of that. How could anything be simpler?

And yet this effort is truly distressing to many people. You might be one of them. Ignore the maze of restraining voices? Don't stop? Don't think? Don't judge? Don't worry about a topic, about how to structure anything, edit it, or in fact anything? HOW CAN YOU ASK THIS OF ME!? And yet literally the only way you can do this "wrong" is by stopping. And for now, no computers or phones please – do it by hand. And for today try to make it to the full three pages.

Cameron's suggestion that you do these pages first thing in your day is based on two excellent points:

Your subconscious is most active (and more importantly, your tired conscious least active) at the borders of sleep and waking. To achieve this, it's best to make sure you get into the writing immediately as you wake, with nary a pause for the toilet or making coffee. The longer you wait, the more your conscious mind wakes up and takes over.

In a practical sense, it gets the activity out of the way. You don't have to keep worrying about finding time for it, or scheduling it and then blowing it, which contributes to ongoing self-distrust

The single most important thing is to do it. That's what matters most. As you've seen, it will be best to do it at the same time and the same place every day. If you have to vary the place or time you do it every day, well that is not great either.

BUT IT'S BETTER THAN NOT DOING THE PAGES AT ALL.

Again: Do not stop. Do not think. Do not correct anything. Do not read it afterward. You will do it every day this week. For today this is your only self-play. Write three pages. Oh and did I make this clear? **DO NOT READ YOUR PAGES.**

If you forget one day this week, or just don't manage, immediately forgive yourself. Don't step over that you didn't do it and ignore it. Rather state out loud, in the mirror if you can: "I didn't do it, it's ok." Let yourself know how you can be sure to be able to count on you to do it tomorrow! Record it and play it back to yourself. Don't explain why you didn't do it, it's not relevant. Just make sure your subconscious is clear that you know it didn't happen, and that you're not just forgetting it. If you walk your dog every single day and then one day you don't, your dog is going to be confused and waste a lot of energy waiting for you. Better to find a way to communicate that this is not happening.

This exercise provides the foundation for this whole course. So do it. Embrace it. Many students who have done this say it alone made the biggest difference. All you need is a pen and a piece of paper.