

Freewriting

Freewriting on a topic can generate content, provide rough material for an outline, develop main points, and help discover a thesis statement. Most importantly, freewriting gets you writing and bypassing writers' block by shutting off the critic in your mind.

1. Write your topic, a restatement of it, or a key word from it at the top of a fresh page.
2. Begin writing **whatever** comes to mind and **keep writing**.

(If you have already created a concept map on the topic, scan the map briefly; something will suggest a first sentence. If you feel stuck, write about anything from the map.)

If you have trouble thinking of what to write, rewrite your topic. After that, if nothing comes to you, write just that over and over: "Nothing is coming to me right now. It's hard to think of anything." Eventually your writing will shift. Keep writing rapidly. Be as specific as you can, but at this point do not criticize or cut. You can do that later. Write down exactly what comes to you for five to ten minutes. Keep your pen moving or your fingers typing.

3. At the end of your time, bring your writing full circle by referring to what started your thinking in the first place. Look at your beginning. Repeat a word, phrase, or important thought or emotion that makes sense. (For an unedited freewriting example, see the back of this page.)
4. You may wish to read aloud your freewrite at this point, as your ear may be able to pick up what's working.
5. Spend one to five minutes cutting, adding or making any changes that would make this piece of writing better. It is very important to leave the editing to this stage; otherwise you will be limiting free associations and new possibilities. If you have enough direction or already have generated all the ideas that you need, you may wish to skip the next stage.

6. Depending on the type of assignment and your background in the topic, essays or reports may be written by linking chunks of edited freewriting. You can freewrite major or minor points and link them with transitions and on a different, smaller scale, you can generate a thesis statement by condensing a freewrite to one statement or position. Similarly, outlines can be obtained by breaking down a freewrite into manageable parts or points.

- adapted very loosely from Writing The Natural Way, Gabriele Lusser Rico (J.P. Tarcher Inc., Los Angeles, 1983).

Unedited Freewriting

Writing Assignment: Discuss a Strong Emotion

Fear

That's right, I'm afraid of lawsuits, lawsuits that'll leave me penniless, or if not penniless, so tight for money that there'd be no vacations, no nights out with a babysitter hired, no movie rentals, no expensive food. We'd live off macaroni, spaghetti, porridge and rice - no money for packaged cereals - hey, that might be good for our health. No juices - too expensive - but also no treats, like Rainforest Crunch. Let someone who has money save the rainforest. The hard part would be having to be tight on presents and books, even used books. It's great being inventive when you don't need to save money, but when you're forced to save, it's not as palatable. The suffering is what I fear from being in a state of penury - the suffering my daughter and my family would undergo if we didn't have money for the enjoyable, enriching things, like gas for a picnic in the country. The fear of poverty is real; hopefully, the fear of being sued is unfounded and will die a sudden death.

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