

CREATIVE WRITING

W O R K B O O K

20 Simple
exercises to
unleash your
creativity



BRIAN HENDERSON

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CREATIVE WRITING WORKBOOK

*20 Simple Exercises to Unleash Your
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Introduction

I want to thank and congratulate you for downloading my book, “Creative Writing Workbook: 20 Simple Exercises to Unleash Your Creativity”.

This book contains proven steps and strategies on how to boost your creativity and enable you to drastically improve your creative writing skills – even if you do not have a writing background.

While creative writing is a personal process, and there are different methods and habits that people develop to dig deep into their reserves whenever they are faced with a drought in creativity, there are basic techniques upon which these personal systems are based. This book will present them to you. Hopefully, you can develop your own system from there.

Thanks again for downloading this book, I hope you enjoy it!

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Chapter 1: Getting Started

When it comes to boosting creativity, there are many different ways through which this can be done, and it can vary greatly from one person to the other. There are people who cultivate special routines and habits meant to help them whenever a creative drought occurs. Others have special items or rituals that they must do in order to ensure maximum inspiration. Needless to say, this can be a very personal process. That said, there are basic techniques upon which these are all based and these are what we 're going to tackle.

Let 's get right to it.

1 - Habits and Routines.

Most people tend to think that routine is the furthest thing from being creative as one can get. In fact, it might bring to mind images of long commutes, 9 to 5 workdays, tedious repetitions, and so on; basically, all the stuff that might drain someone of any inspiration. However, this isn't always the case. In fact, quite a lot of successful creative writers make use of routines to their advantage. Instead of waiting and sitting around until inspiration shows up, they wrestle and wrangle it to their will.

These people would typically get up at around the same time, eat a fairly similar breakfast each day and then take it upon themselves to sit at their writing desk or stand inside their studio at the same hour each day. History provides us with exemplary examples — Franz Kafka began writing at 11pm every night while Benjamin Franklin would wake up at 5am every morning to ask himself one question: “What good shall I do this day?” A lot of creative, as surprising as this might sound, find that routine actually stimulates their creativity. Some view it as a way of nudging the mind to get into creation mode.

So, what kind of routine should you develop? Something simple. Keeping things this way should help in preventing you from becoming overwhelmed by the routine itself. Of course, if you choose something more complicated, you can end up wasting time and energy on it that you could have been using for your writing instead. Writer Stephen King always keeps water or tea by his side whenever he's writing. It is simple, yet effective judging by his prolific writing. Keep your routine to a maximum 2 to 4 things and change things as you go along. Tweaking would help you perfect your pre-writing routine to a tee.

Some things that you can include in your routine:

- Going for a walk before you begin writing.
- Waking up at a specific hour.
- Writing down a specific number of words within an hour before taking a break.
- Listing down 20 different ideas before you begin.

These are just a few simple things you can try out. You ' re bound to discover what works and what doesn ' t work for you once you do get started with this method. Remember, do your best to stick to the routine you created and observe how it helps get your creativity flowing.

2 - Planning

The thing with routine is that it can get very boring and you might find yourself becoming just a tiny bit frustrated over it. The whole process might become tedious and in some cases, even drain you of much needed motivation. This is why it's also important to plan ahead. This does not mean that you should plan out your day down to the very last minute. It simply means that you know what you need to do for that day while also leaving some allowance should something unexpected come up. You wouldn't want to shut yourself off from anything just because you want to keep up with your routine, right?

How do you begin planning? Well, take your routine in consideration. How much time will it consume? Now think about how many hours you want to spend on writing, an approximate time would be enough as most writers do not really have a set time for this. Think about the things you want to achieve within that time and which ones are of higher priority. You can opt to make a list of these things or simply keep them in mind as you work through your writing. Not only will this list give you direction, it will also put your mind into work and create mode. Having a clear guide always helps.

Give yourself a deadline instead of simply going with the flow. While the latter can work, it might also create unhealthy writing and work habits. A deadline would provide you with an approximation when it comes to your time. You might find that the simple addition of this step to your writing allows you to write more without needing to forget everything else-- as quite a few writers have a tendency to do.

Do remember, planning need not be rigid. Keep it simple and suited to your personal preferences. The less you have to think or worry about, the more creative you can become.

3 - Spelling and Grammar

Here's the deal with this, many writers are often offended whenever they are asked to do this-- they are writers after all, and wouldn't be so if their spelling and grammar aren't up to par. However, even the best do make mistakes and are also prone to becoming repetitive when it comes to the words they use. Simple grammar mistakes such as interchanging the uses of they're and their or lose and loose are quite common. Make mistakes like that and you can easily be considered an amateur.

And you wouldn't want that to happen, right?

Grammar mistakes are just as common as spelling mistakes. However, it can be a bit more flexible. For example, it is totally fine to start your sentences with "and" or "but" if it better suits your writing style. The same goes for the well-known "don't end your sentences with a preposition" rule-- this can be broken too. For more modern readers, these might even go unnoticed.

However, not all rules are made to be broken. A lot of them do make sense and actually make your work much easier to understand. The difference is in knowing that you made a mistake. If you are fully aware that you're making a mistake and doing so to experiment or get creative with your work, then go ahead. However, if you keep making mistakes unknowingly, it might cause your credibility to weaken.

Another common mistake that people make would be using punctuation wrongly or not using it at all, which then renders their sentences unintelligible. This is one of the easiest mistakes to make and most people don't even realize it. Commas can be very tricky little things, so always use them wisely. The same goes for using apostrophes. In fact, some people have tried to get it banned! Lastly, there's also the common misuse of "me, myself and I". Mistakes like this one could have been easily avoided if they continuously brushed up on it.

Knowing the rules when it comes to writing is important. Not only for avoiding them, but also for getting creative when it comes to breaking them in order to suit your style better. It would also make your writing a lot more seamless and enjoyable to read.

4 - Flowery prose and unnecessary use of adjectives

A lot of times, adverbs and adjectives are actually not needed as much. For example:

1. *Anna ate her food quickly.*
2. *Anna gulped down her food.*

So which of the two do you think is better? Most people would opt for the 2nd one as it makes use of a strong verb instead of relying upon an adverb. It immediately creates an image in the reader's mind which you can develop even further to get them more immersed in the story you're trying to tell. However, don't get too carried away with this. Avoid long-winded descriptions of simple actions. It would make your work tedious to read and only very few people can really pull this off-- think of the classics. There are always better ways of adding color and life to your writing. Experiment with what works best for your genre and style.

Do keep in mind that this is not meant to change your overall style and character as a writer. However, it is also a healthy habit to always look at one's work with a critical eye and improve on it. This is something that a lot of authors often do and is also a sign of the ever evolving creative mind.

5 - Never hesitate revising your first draft.

There's nothing better than the feeling of finishing a full draft. It's a testament to your hard work and it also means that the job is done- for now. Surely, you feel ready to show it off and publish, but pause for a minute and look at your draft again. It is called a first draft for a reason. It is still rough and will certainly need a lot more polishing.

Here's your next step: Read through it. You may have the best plot, the most interesting characters and scenes, but none of these things would truly shine if your writing remains unpolished and raw. Revise and rewrite parts, don't just look for typos or grammar errors-- go in depth. Check for plot holes, for the flow of your story, its structure and overall tone. Look at it through the eyes of both reader and critic.

Revising does include proof reading and editing, but it is much more than that. It takes any time from a week to months. Editing for structure, for flow, for holes, for cutting a lot of prose, for characters and setting. Perhaps your plot could be made simpler or further expanded to create a more interesting story. Revising is no simple task, but if you manage to do it properly, you can make your work truly shine.

6 - Get another person's opinion.

If you have someone whose opinion you trust, ask them to read your work and provide critique. This might seem scary, but it would provide you with great insight. Another eye might spot things that you have missed during revision and they would also be able to give you their thoughts on the story you have created.

Did they enjoy reading it? Is it something they would recommend to others? A yes on both is definitely a good sign. However, if they return your work with a few criticisms, don't allow it to discourage you. Take their words and use them to better your work-- without sacrificing your creative vision, of course. Keep experimenting and you'll find the right balance for this. Just remember to keep an open mind and you'll certainly continue to evolve and improve creatively.

You can also opt to get more than 1 person's opinion; this depends entirely upon you. More people also means more input, but there is a downside to this. You might get confused and overwhelmed by the differing opinions which can also reflect in your work. Again, balance is the key word here.

Chapter 2: Dealing With Writer's Block

One of the biggest issues that you'll face when it comes to creative writing would be writer's block. Quite a lot of folks tend to think that there's a magic bullet or an instant solution that would boost their motivation or provide them with a shortcut to fixing writer's block. There is a romantic notion that inspiration is something that strikes you like lightning, igniting a spark that would have you writing continuously until you are done with your masterpiece.

However, this is not how things work.

The reality is that you might spend a couple of days writing feverishly, only to lose that motivation at some point. Your ideas dry up and if you don't work for it, this inspiration might never re-ignite again. This is how a lot of good work goes to waste; a lazy writer who keeps waiting for their writer's block to disappear instead of working to break it down.

While it may feel like you're working against the impossible, any effort that you put into getting past it will pay off. It was Ernest Hemingway who once said that sometimes, writing comes easy and on other occasions, it feels like trying to break down a wall with your bare hands. Yes, it will be frustrating and you might feel like trashing the work altogether-- DON'T. There are things you can do to bring back that lost motivation and completely destroy your writer's block.

Here's how:

7 - Write in smaller amounts.

This means that you should set smaller project goals and start counting words instead of pages. If you push yourself too hard, frustration will begin to mount and it can definitely work against you. Instead of pushing yourself to write 30 to 50 pages of forced soulless writing, why not work on 3000 words on some of your finest instead? Think quality over quantity until your inspiration returns and you're able to churn out chapter after chapter of great storytelling. What matters here is that you're working on your material, despite the block, instead of just letting it sit.

This would also eliminate that feeling of uncertainty when it comes to where and how you ought to begin. For beginners, even this might seem daunting and impossible. Take a step back, take a deep breath and start writing whatever comes to mind. Don't think about how much you're writing, just let it flow.

Practice this daily and you might find that your writer's block has begun to diminish and that you're able to write with a bit more ease.

8 - Evaluate your work and reflect on it.

This is a lot easier to do when you're writing in small amounts at a time. It is easy to get lost in your own story and plot if you're dealing with a behemoth of a story.

Do this after you've completed your work. Step back and read through all that you have written. Does it excite you? Are there confusing parts or spots that are too complicated? If there's a way to simplify things without losing the color of your work, try and see if it fits better.

Next, look at your characters. Do they interest you? Remember, if you're bored with your own writing, then it is likely that your readers would feel the same way too. Evaluate everything with a critical eye and cut out the unnecessary bits. Cutting is your friend when it comes to keeping a tight story. And once you're done, you can begin writing the next part.

Why 3000 words? This number is fairly easy to reach, yet challenging enough to get your mind thinking. Reviewing can be done easily and if you keep working on it daily, it should give you a sizable amount of writing by the time you're done. After all, you cannot use this exercise to slack off on your work.

9 - Set a time limit.

Consider this is an extension of the previous techniques you've been provided. It's akin to stopping in the middle of a sentence once you're done with writing for the day. To some, it might seem absurd to do this — why leave it unfinished? Well, nothing is done without purpose and when it comes to this, the act of leaving a sentence unfinished is meant to kick-start your inspiration the next time you sit down to write. Seeing a half-finished sentence will definitely put your mind into work-mode almost immediately and as an added benefit, you might even think of a better sentence compared to the previous one.

If you're following the “write smaller” method and want to apply this step, all you really need to do is stop writing completely once you reach the 3000 word count and make sure you didn't go past the time limit you have set for yourself. It doesn't matter which part of the story you're in, once you're done — that's it. You can write down your ideas separately to avoid forgetting them. Similarly, if the words aren't coming to you, fill the time limit with as much writing as possible. It's fine if you don't manage to reach the 3000 word count, but managing at least half of it should be your secondary goal.

Setting a time limit would help you avoid burning out from writing way too much — so much that your words actually become stale. On the other hand, it could also push your mind to churn out ideas. Some people like working with pressure while others, especially those experiencing some form of writer's block, could use it to nudge themselves into action.

Writer's block is something that will affect all writers at some point. Some never truly recover from it, or rather, never really tried to do anything about the problem. As magical as it sounds, subscribing to the notion that inspiration is a rare butterfly that only visits ever so often would get you nowhere. Everybody struggles with getting their words on paper and giving life to the things they create in their heads. It is up to the individual to do something about it — beginners and professionals alike will benefit from it.

So remember, should it happen to you, don't be lazy and be proactive when it comes to chasing down inspiration and making it work for you.

Chapter 3: Developing Creative Habits

10 - Taking notes.

Ever wonder why writers often carry a notebook and pen with them? This is because inspiration could come from just about anywhere and at any given time. While you 're traveling somewhere, you might find words and sentences popping into your head — things that can be expanded upon and transformed into a story or something to start it from. You might see sights that inspire you to create a character or a story plot. Write everything down and don 't be worried about form or organizing. Take notes as they occur to you and make sure that you keep your notebook handy for when you do sit down and write. Go through all of the ideas you have listed down, one is bound to jump at you and get you writing nonstop.

Remember, take notes as you go. For many writers, once the moment has passed it becomes difficult to retrieve.

11 - Brainstorming and Freewriting.

Freewriting is an exercise that 's useful for whenever you 're stonewalled and cannot seem to continue what you were working on. It is also something that writers do whenever they feel blocked. What you need to do is sit down for about ten minutes and then proceed to writing everything you can think of about the topic you 're working on. Write down ideas for your character, the plot of your story, ideas for a different story — just about anything you can think. If nothing comes to mind, write down “ ideas, ideas, ideas ” repeatedly until something does occur to you. The goal here is to not stop writing for the whole ten minutes of the exercise. Some people can get inspired within minutes of doing this while others might end the exercise empty-handed. Both are totally fine, you can repeat the exercise as much as you want to until you start to uncover ideas.

This is meant to help nudge your creativity and actually get you writing even if it isn 't directly related to what you 're working on. A lot of the ideas that you write down during freewriting will end up in the bin, but there could be gold in there as well. You can also make use of this exercise as a way of warming yourself up before doing the more serious writing. Say, you 're writing in the morning and your mind just isn 't in the write mental state yet. Freewrite and get it into work mode so you 'll be able to write more smoothly later on.

Freewriting and brainstorming are very similar to each other, though the former has a bit more direction and a goal compared to the latter. However, brainstorming could be very useful for this purpose as well. This is especially so if you are only getting started with your story and still trying to piece together different ideas. Brainstorming is basically dumping all of the plots, characters, etc. that you have in your head and then sorting through them to find the gems which you might be able to use later on. It 's also great exercise, if you 're simply trying to get your mind going.

12 - Skipping the opening—for now.

Let ' s put it simply, the beginning is always the hardest. It puts the most pressure on the writer and for beginners, something called the “ perfect draft syndrome ” may actually begin to settle in. This refers to an unnecessary perfectionism which is brought on by the “ need ” to create something good from the very start. It was Hemingway, once again, who reminded us that: “ The first draft of anything is shit. ” And this is almost always the case — for even the most seasoned writers.

So how do you get past this? Change things up and don ' t start from the beginning. If you have a pretty clear idea of your story ' s outline or at least, how you want things to unfold, then getting started in the middle of it or somewhere a little past the beginning should help you get to actually writing. Once you ' re past those sections, start another one and slowly build your confidence.

You ' ll know it for yourself if you ' re ready to start the opening of the story itself — the very first chapter. This might seem unorthodox, but it certainly works. Perhaps you already have a scenario in mind that would fit somewhere later in the story ' s timeline, don ' t wait until you ' ve written a beginning to start working on it. Write out the scenario then go back to the beginning. You can smooth out the transitions later on and it would be much easier to do.

13 - Expand your vocabulary.

It ' s not that you can ' t find the right words — sometimes, it ' s just that you repeat some of them too much that your work begins to mimic each other. Limited vocabulary can also limit your ability to become more creative and be able to express what you truly want. Now, quite a lot of writers tend to neglect this, thinking that all those years of writing exempts them from it. However, time can certainly take its toll on a person ' s memory and comfort zones can become boxes if left unchecked. The last thing you want is for your work to be considered stale or a copy of the previous one just because you keep re-using the same old words and descriptors.

There ' s nothing wrong with picking up a dictionary every now and then or looking for alternative ways of saying something. You can even try and learn new dialects or languages as this could help you discover interesting phrases or sayings that you can use in your work. Beginners, take note! Always remember that there is more than one way of saying something.

Chapter 4: Becoming More Productive

Motivation, much like inspiration, can be very fickle. If you 're not motivated, chances are, you won 't be doing much writing as well and for writers, this is basically a kiss of death. Beginners are the ones who tend to succumb to this most, but more senior writers are not completely immune to it.

That being said, it isn 't as if there 's no solution or "cure" for it. In fact, there 's quite a lot of things that you can do in order to boost your motivation. All you really need is the discipline and the will to follow through — otherwise, you 'd remain down in the dumps with plenty of blank pages and nothing to fill it with.

So, to get you started, here are some tips:

14 - Create a need to write: Reward system.

Every writer has their reasons for doing what they do — the really lucky ones get to write for a living and because they are in love with the craft. Others are in love with it, but have yet to really make money off of their passion. The latter often leaves people frustrated and uninspired; stressed from their day job and lacking any real motivation to write. However hard it might be, this is something that one should do their best to avoid.

Give yourself any reason to write. Do you want a new pair of shoes? Instead of just going out and buying it — make it the reward for being able to write a certain number of words. 5,000 for a pair of new shoes, 1,000 for your favorite coffee drink or 2,000 for a fancier dinner than your usual.

Don't stop there! Do you want to buy something bigger, like a brand new TV or a sofa? Well, try finishing at least one to two stories and pitch it to publishers. It doesn't matter whether it gets picked up or not. The point here is that you have finished two stories which you can send to plenty other publishers in the hopes of getting paid for it. Stop hoping you'll get discovered and start doing something that will help make sure that they find you.

15 - Find out what motivates you. Internal vs.

External.

Why do you write? Do you do it because you feel some form of accomplishment, happiness or creative satisfaction whenever you do? These things are what 's referred to as internal rewards; they are also the most common reasons why a lot of people go into writing. However, there are also such things as external rewards and these include recognition and money. Some people write for both external and internal reasons — in our society, this would be the most practical. It is the dream of many beginners to someday make money off of what they 're most passionate about: writing.

To get started though, you also need to have an understanding of your own motivations. It 's always best to focus more on the creative aspect of things and develop as you go along. However, if you 're most motivated by external rewards then there 's certainly nothing wrong with that — as long as you 're writing what you love and enjoy, then that is all you really need.

16 - Patience is a virtue.

Yes, it is the most motivating thing in the world to be writing about the things you love the most. Having the topics you 're interested in, not only make things easier to work with, but you 're also keener when it comes to research. However, beginners would be lucky to get the opportunity to do this during their first attempt. There are stages to writing, especially if it 's something that you want to turn into a career and get paid for your work.

In the beginning, you won 't always get to pick about what you write — this is especially so if you have to work under a management. In some cases, you might even get assignments that are outside of your comfort zone. A creative writer knows how to make things sound interesting — so make sure you do this. Practice patience and tackle your work with enthusiasm even if it isn 't the most motivating thing in the world. Do this and you 'll produce great work which, of course, could lead to better writing options.

Remember, it 's a process!

17 - Admit any writer faults that you may have.

Write everything down. Were you able to accomplish what you needed to do today? How about sending sample pieces of writing to different publishers? Were you procrastinating instead of pushing for productivity? More often than not, writers tend to use their block as an excuse for not writing anything. However, this doesn't count as there are numerous ways of getting rid of that block and becoming productive once more.

By admitting any faults you might have, you can then begin work on improving them. Many writers feel motivated whenever they accomplish something and depressed whenever they end a day without having done as much as they wanted. YET, many still end up procrastinating on the job.

Set a goal for yourself and try to avoid falling into old habits. Should you do, write them down for the day and tell yourself to be better tomorrow. Slowly but surely, all these writer faults that you have would disappear. Just make sure you stay disciplined enough to make that happen.

18 - Share openly when it comes to sharing your writing.

Sounds easy enough to do, doesn't it? However, there are some writers who can be quite stingy when it comes to allowing people to read their work — whether it be a work in progress or something that's already been done. There could be many reasons as to why they do this, mostly personal ones and a lot of them is valid as well. However, choosing a select few of your friends to review your writing before you do anything else with it can actually be a very healthy creative habit to have.

1. It can help in motivating you. The knowledge that people close to you will be reviewing your work can actually make you write earlier, better and more than the usual. Of course, you'll feel a need to impress them and also show what you're truly capable of. This is especially so if the people you're presenting the work to is also within the writing industry. The added pressure can make you work harder than usual.
2. Referring to #1, if continued as a practice, it could help you develop a disciplined manner of working-- as well as enabling you to feel more confident about the work you put out.

Just remember to take any criticisms and suggestions openly. This is also another aspect of this practice, after all. To gain perspective and see some of the things that you might have missed.

Chapter 5: Become Responsive to Inspiration

Here's the thing about most writers: They find inspiration in just about anything. In the most mundane of things, in everyday activities and even in their dreams. However, these ideas don't always make it into writing. Some get lost in the flurry of daily life while there are those that weren't strong enough. Other times, opportunities are lost because the writers weren't responsive enough — meaning, they didn't take the idea and really worked to mold it into something great.

This is what separates writers from someone who simply writes. You will be told that there is no such thing as an original idea; that something once came from somewhere else — while this holds true in some cases, it isn't always so. There is genuine inspiration and you will find it in many of the best creative works in both recent and classic times.

So the question now is, how does one become more responsive to inspiration? Some have it innately and do it without being truly aware. Others have to work just a bit more. Here are a couple of things that you can try:

19 - Always keep a journal with you.

It might seem silly, writing in order to get inspired to write some more, but this is an effective way of recording your thoughts. We've tackled this earlier, but not quite in depth. In this case, what you'll be recording would be your dreams — these are great sources, if not endless founts, of inspiration. Your dreams would be able to show you things that do not exist in everyday life. If you're looking for something new and never before read or seen? Then your dreams is a great place to start.

20 - Familiarize yourself with solitude and be more observant.

This doesn't mean that you ought to go through periods of being reclusive — certainly not. What it does mean, however, is that you should learn how to appreciate your own company. Whenever we are alone and in the quiet, we become more aware of our surroundings and of what goes on in our heads. Everything seems clearer and much more vivid than usual. Take advantage of this and observe people; observe everything that's happening around you.

How do people's laughter sound? What about the wind passing through leaves? The light of the sun against rooftops? What of the sky? By becoming more observant of things, you gain the ability to capture the simplest of actions and images then turn them into something beautiful in writing. There is poetry in everything; and in some way, it is up to the writer to bring that to the surface.

With just a little bit of work, you can slowly become more responsive to bits of inspiration that's scattered everywhere. All you really need to do is open your eyes more, listen more and feel more - as writers often do.

Conclusion

Thank you again for downloading this book!

I hope this book was able to help provide you with more ideas when it comes to boosting your creative writing and becoming a better writer overall; that you need not do or experience something spectacular in order to get things moving. Sometimes, it ' s the simplest of things that end up inspiring us the most. All you really need to do is a bit of physical and mental work in order to find it.

Finally, if you enjoyed this book, then I ' d like to ask you for a favor, would you be kind enough to leave a review for this book on Amazon? It ' d be greatly appreciated!

Thank you and good luck!