

Loop Writing: Ways to Get Words on Paper

Loop writing is directed freewriting. Try three or four of these ways to explore your topic. For each approach you choose, write steadily, without stopping, for ten minutes. Then reread to find the good ideas, the energy, and the center.

1. **First thoughts.** Put down as fast as you can all the thoughts and feelings you happen to have about the topic. These are not necessarily good or true thoughts—just first thoughts.
2. **Prejudices.** Let your biases run rampant without censoring them. If it is hard to stop censoring your thoughts, pretend to be someone else who is an extremist and write that person's views.
3. **Instant version.** Turn out a quick sketch of your final piece. Write before you read and research a topic.
4. **Dialogues.** Give each of your feelings or ideas a voice and have them start talking to each other.
5. **Narrative thinking.** Write the story of your thinking. This helps to work out tangles in your mind.
6. **Stories.** Write typical and unusual stories; write stories that stick in your mind for no particular reason. Give a thumbnail version.
7. **Scenes.** Stop the flow of time and take still photographs. Focus on individual moments.
8. **Portraits.** Give thumbnail portraits: qualities, characteristics, physical appearance, movements, things the person said or did.
9. **Vary the audience.** Write to someone different, someone older or younger, someone from a different place or with a different point of view.
10. **Vary the writer.** Write as though you were a different person, older or younger, with a different point of view, from a different place.
11. **Vary the time.** Write as though you were living in the past or the future.
12. **Errors.** Write down things that are almost true, things that you are tempted to think are true, things others think are true but you know are false, things that are dangerous mistakes.
13. **Lies.** Write down quickly all the odd or crazy things you can come up with.

Taken from Peter Elbow, *Writing With Power* (New York: Oxford, 1981), 59-77.