

10 Easy Ways to Catch Your Writing Groove

An E-book featuring Guidance
on Creative Writing, Time
Management,
& Encouragement

by
Majeedah Johnson

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Welcome!

Hello!

So you wish to write? Find ways to reignite that creative flame within you? Or simply quiet the inner critic whispering that you shouldn't dare pick up that pen?

Are you ready to improve your writing techniques? Do you wish to stop talking about it and do it? You've come to a valuable place for assistance and support.

Writing is freeing. It can bring strength, comfort, courage, resolve and loosen those hang ups within us. The featured writing tips, prompts, exercises, and recommended reading list are aimed to help you on your merry way and spark your inner muse.

Let's get to it!

Majeedah

Author, Blogger, Workshop Facilitator

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Break Down Fears

Thinking will not overcome fear but action will.

-W. Clement Stone, Businessman, Philanthropist,
New Thought self-help book author

Yes. I'm raising my hand with you. I've experienced it too... getting pumped on a compelling writing idea but losing steam and thinking I'll get to it later. Instead, that idea runs around in my head and eventually evaporates, or its details dampen. Working on the idea becomes a moving target well into "Nevuary."

We sometimes procrastinate until we're ready, inspired, fearless, have the time or have the right conditions. Tomorrow swiftly moves into next month.

It's essential to start now, right now in this moment. Wait no longer. YOU, yes you have what it takes to begin. That spark of curiosity isn't by accident. Those ideas and inspirations keeping you up at night deserve nurturing. They're for you to explore. Before you can finish, you must begin.

These roadblocks manifest scenarios where creative projects solely exist within our minds-not on paper or out in the world to share with others. This equals unfinished writings and untapped potential. We sometimes have trouble harnessing the courage to pursue our heart's desires altogether. This can leave us feeling unfulfilled and living somewhere other than the present where we can truly facilitate change within our lives.

I say, How about doing it anyway, regardless of how you actually feel? What about cultivating a different relationship with your fears? Act anyway.

We experience a range of emotions from day to day. What about sitting down and writing in spite of being terrified, doubtful, nervous, or unsure? Your favorite author probably had the same feelings, pushed through and finished that story by writing one word at a time. That initiative allowed you to enjoy their work.

Exercise 1:

Here are some affirmations to speak aloud as you begin jotting down your ideas:

- I AM capable of writing compelling stories.
- I AM a magnificent artist and creator.
- My words have the power to transform my life and those around me.
- My life and mind are open to infinite possibilities.
- Writing is a freeing journey and I am ready for this path.

Repeat these and other positive daily affirmations that you find helpful. Challenge any beliefs that say otherwise. Finding time in the mornings before you share your day with others can impact how you approach ideas when they arrive.

Try it for a week as you begin writing about new projects or dusting off that manuscript that's been on the shelf for a while.

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Tick Tock: Find Time to Write

Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning and focused effort.

-Paul J. Meyer, Author

With multiple competing commitments including family, career, relationships, and self-care, establishing the time and space to be creative can prove challenging. Forming a routine and completing projects can seem impossible. Pursuing your writing endeavors takes effort.

If you're working on building consistency, these following suggestions can get you started:

Times to write

- 15-20 minutes in the morning

Try this when you first awake before readying for work or starting the day. Instead of logging onto social media first thing and having your mind travel a million miles-a-minute, give yourself the gift of quiet and simply write what comes to you.

- 15-20 minutes at lunchtime

Many of us unwind for our afternoon break with our colleagues and friends. There might even be an expectation to join others for a lunch hour or longer. Afterward, your day is full with tasks and possibly meetings. This might not give you breathing room. Before joining friends or coworkers for lunch, pause during this window and write down your ideas. Bring a small notebook and retreat to a place where you'll have some solitude.

- 15-20 minutes before bedtime

Keep a notepad by your bed and make this part of your ritual for winding down at the day's completion. If you're more tech savvy or use a cell phone often, take notes on your phone. But be mindful not to wander onto the Internet or allow texting to devour your creative time. You can even use a recording app on your phone or digital recorder to capture ideas. However you do it, make time to get those ideas down.

Additional Tips:

- Set alarm reminders on your phone or wristwatch to establish regularity with these practices.
- Keep a list of possible distractions throughout the day and check which ones you can do without to maximize your time to write.
- Once you establish these times to write, work to not compromise and build consistency.
- You must make time for hobbies and passions that drive you, no matter what.
- Do an Internet search on your favorite authors and discover how they find time to write.

Spaces and Places: Spots to Write In

Usually when I'm out doing stuff, I just sit out in the world, doing the wild thing. I don't really get a chance to just chill out until I come here, in my creative space.

-Bootsy Collins, Guitarist, Futuristic Musician

It doesn't matter where you write as long as you're writing. Getting in the habit of being ready to write in most places can help you capture more ideas, more often.

Here are some places to try writing:

- **Coffee Shop/Cafe**

There are probably more than several coffee shops across your town/city. You might find one that's quieter than others. It helps to purchase and support the business while you're there. Baristas often remember customers and can also prove helpful and supportive of your work.

- **Mall/Shopping Center**

Many food courts have plenty of seating for patrons. If you're out running errands and have an extra 20-30 minutes, pull out your writing device, be it cell phone or notepad, and write.

- Your Home

Clear a space in your home where you can write at any time. To cultivate your writing mind, clear any bills, junk or clutter. This area can include a vision board or goals you wish to accomplish. You can have a short stack of preferred reading or magazines. It could even be a corner of your home with pillows. The most important aspect is that it encourages your writing.

- Public Transportation

The first drafts of my debut novel, *Jump the River* were created during my hour-plus commute on the bus and trains. Not only did I begin to look forward to the long ride, I started to plan for what I'd work on between train transfers. I wrote in diaries and mostly notebooks. I still cherish those early writings.

- Your Car

Many of us spend a lot of time in our cars, if we have them. We commute to work, run errands, and travel to and fro' in our vehicles. If you drive to work, you can record yourself talking out ideas or hashing out dialogue. Finding a quiet parking lot or a local park might prove for a great writing location.

- Happy Hour

Plan to arrive 15-20 minutes earlier than your friends and take a notepad. It's a good time to people watch and discover new ideas. Write on the back of a napkin or receipt if needed. Just keep up with what's coming to mind.

This might be a good place to start if you're working up to 15-minute writing sessions more regularly. Not all bars and pubs are noisy. Others you can tune out for a bit and look forward to texting those storylines.

Writing Prompts:

Try these to get into your writing flow.

- Describe how your morning or early afternoon went. Include your motivations, how you awoke, what you had for breakfast, and/or your type of commute.
- Describe your surroundings without taking a break or thinking too much. Write what comes to mind. If you're near a window, describe the amount of sun or light coming through to the colors of items around you. Is there a scent in the air? If you're able to see outside, what types of clouds are pushing across the sky?

4 Journal like a 'G'

Whether you're keeping a journal or writing as a meditation, it's the same thing. What's important is you're having a relationship with your mind.

-Natalie Goldberg, Author

The more often you allow your ideas to strike the page, the better your relationship with your creative self can become. This is a method of documenting your thoughts and emotions. I consider my journal a space that is solely mine to express my feelings, detail my dreams, and log my daily motivations. It is kept private.

Purchase a journal and keep it in a special place. In the beginning, it may seem difficult or intimidating to collect yourself and document your thoughts. Take a few deep breaths and embrace the space on the page. You can start with a few words each day that capture how you feel. It could be a few favorite words and you go from there.

If you're at a loss for what to write, try these journal exercises for starters:

- List four things for which you are grateful.

- If money and time were no object, which project or dream would you pursue first, and why?
- What is your earliest childhood memory?
- List five words that describe your personality.
- What was your first job?
- Who are your three favorite people in your life?
- Describe your favorite food.
- What was your most embarrassing moment?

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Motivate Your Inner Muse

All of us need to be with a mysterious, tantalizing source of inspiration that teases our sense of wonder and goads us on to life's next adventure.

Bob Brezsny, Author

If you only write when the desire strikes, you might not reach your writing goals any time soon. Some of us struggle with being creative more consistently. Writer's block is all too familiar for most. If I'm not able to write, I make sure to keep an open mind so that when the time arrives, I have ideas and sources from which to pull.

Methods to use in conjuring your inner muse:

➤ **Meditation**

During this quiet time, tap into that silent mental space to spark your creativity. Discover meditative methods that you prefer.

➤ **Watch less television**

TV can help us relax and provide background sound. Just don't let this become a time suck or method of procrastination.

- Document dreams
Dreams can be valuable material to include and enhance a story. Many colorful stories and films utilize dream sequences for storytelling.
- People watching
I'm sure you've seen people in real life that are stranger than fiction. Observe everyone who's in front of you. Describe their clothes, mannerisms, hair, and other physical descriptors. Note the sounds and pitches of their voices. Try people watching at airports, train stations, and grocery stores.
- Read magazines
Peruse exotic travel and interior design spreads to inspire your writing. Select one of the feature photos and take notes on what you see.
- Read your favorite author's work
Observe what holds your attention. Is it dialogue, description, pacing, or a fine detail that only an expert writer would observe?
- Check out different types of writing
Try poetry, song lyrics, and film scripts for added inspiration.

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Your Voice, Your Story

If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't written yet, then you must write it.

-Toni Morrison, Author

Your impression on a character's life, situation, and point of view are valuable. They deserve to be developed. When working to designate your author voice and the distinctive voice of your characters keep writing. It's beneficial to write a lot and then edit when the time comes. You should read a lot of diverse works, in and outside of your genre.

Many writers, at some time in our lives, question whether what we wish to create is relevant and if there's an audience for our work. Plenty of what ifs can fill the space and expand the distance between starting, completion, and sharing our work with others.

Tap into communities of other artists to receive support for your continuous developing craft.

Other methods:

➤ Writing groups

Check LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media sources for writing groups and discussion threads. You'll find the questions and obstacles that you're having with your work or thought processes are often similar to that of others.

➤ Mentors

Local or distant, begin researching writers that have accomplished what you wish to do. Follow these artists on social media and check out their creative processes and tips for getting into the art of storytelling.

➤ Work on varied writing projects

This can provide you a different perspective and give yourself a break while your mind continues working on other topics. This can be within a different genre and/or point of view than what you're accustomed to.

➤ Interview yourself

List your goals with this project. Include your deepest creative desires.

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Hack Your Brain

No great artist ever sees things as they really are. If he did, he would cease to be an artist.

-Oscar Wilde, playwright, essayist,
poet, novelist

Not everyone awakes at 5 am, has tea or coffee with breakfast and retreats to a private location to write for 4 hours each day. I've talked to a number of writers who get down on themselves because their writing process isn't like someone else they know. Therefore, they think they're not doing enough or that this invalidates the space they do have to create. However you come into your creative energy and find time, do just that. Embrace what works best for you.

I'm a morning person and also have a full-time job. When I'm on deadline, I write before work and often must stay up late to finish my projects. On weekends, I'm often in a quiet space in my dining room, at a coffee shop or in a corner at the library. These are times that I don't lend to socializing. When it's time to write, it's time to write!

Throughout the moments when I'm not writing, I'm often readying to create and have an idea what I need to accomplish. This helps me to hit the page with fewer distractions. When the time comes, I work on a character's backstory, dialogue, or update an outline.

I am also skilled at establishing agendas and project timelines. I began to value these skills when I was able to apply them to my creative writing.

Working on multiple stories and writing projects requires organization. I track storylines, character's physical attributes, and research resources on central spreadsheets. In addition, I track my word count to understand my progress during writing sessions.

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Don't Doubt, Just Do (It)

Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt.

-William Shakespeare, Poet,
Playwright, Actor

The power of doubt can be a mother*! Our hesitations about what we're capable of can crowd our thinking and especially hinder creativity.

In writing my first detective novel, *Jump the River*, I was convinced it was the only project I'd ever complete. I poured over it for ten plus years by writing and rewriting, but mostly doubting that what was on the page was any good.

The feedback I received in writer's groups, from fellow writers, and my mentor was constructive and encouraging. I was consistently encouraged to put my work out in the world. But doubt kept creeping up and shackling my literary feet. I avoided opportunities to finalize, publish, and share my work until the weight and guilt became unbearable.

One morning, I decided to throw off my doubts and fears. I decided that I would attract a core group of individuals that could assist me. Within a couple of weeks my luck changed. I met a literary consultant who helped me project plan my way to completing *Jump the River*. I selected an editor within my genre and worked with a patient and talented graphic designer.

Creating and managing a publishing company continues to teach me of my expanding capabilities. I take responsibility for the creative works shared and anticipate helping others realize their greatness. There are always ways to mature and learn. I look forward to becoming more comfortable in this space.

Being aware of my writing process helps identify areas where my clients can improve and also be further encouraged.

Your Wish, Your Hands

I feel that luck is preparation meeting opportunity.

-Oprah, talk show host, philanthropist,
actress, producer

Why not be bold and daring about where you'd like your written work published? Who not to aspire to live your best self but you? Why not dream and then plan how you'll execute your goals?

The Internet is an incredible tool in connecting with others and honing our craft. Most likely, whatever you wish to achieve in your artistic endeavors, someone in the world has accomplished it.

Make a list of places where you want your work seen. Include literary magazines, anthologies and received accolades and recognitions. The value of writing down your heart's desires is real.

Check out submission processes. If it's an agent and a book deal you wish to land, research how others did this. There are plenty of informative conferences, online videos, tutorials, and courses.

Dare to dream, plan, and persevere, and continue sharpening your skills. The network of others wishing to support and encourage your efforts is vast.

Drafts, Drafts, & More Drafts

The three great essentials to achieve anything worthwhile are, first, hard work; second, stick-to-itiveness; third, common sense.

-Thomas Edison, inventor and businessman

- **Read your work aloud**
You'd be surprised how this can improve your editing skills. This exercise helps identify passages needing enhancement, missed sentences, and establish rhythm and pace. Also try reading your work aloud to friends.
- **Record yourself reading aloud**
Invest in a digital recorder. Listen and check for places in your writings to be improved.
- **Outlines**
Outlines can aid in structuring your story at any stage of the project. Research types of outlines and see which work for you.
- **Let it breathe**
Sometimes you will need to step away from a project. Returning to it with fresh eyes can provide you further insight.

Recommended Reading

While writers by necessity create alone, writing involves constant learning. Read work that is similar to yours and also writings that originate from authors of varied backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, and experiences.

Check out these titles:

This Year Write Your Novel, Walter Mosley

On Writing, Stephen King

The Artist's Way, Julia Cameron

Writing Down the Bones, Freeing the Writer Within, Natalie Goldberg,

The Writing Life, Annie Dillard

How to Write Bestselling Fiction, Dean Koontz.

On Writing Well: An Informal Guide to Writing Nonfiction, William Zinsser

The 3 AM Epiphany: Uncommon Writing Exercises That Transform Your Fiction, Brian Kiteley

The Art of Creative Thinking: 89 Ways to See Things Differently, Rod Judkins

Words of Encouragement

You made it! Thank you for letting me share with you. These tips and exercises have helped improve my writing. We are social creatures and can learn a lot from each other.

It is never too late to start. Pick up that journal, notepad, or flip on your laptop. Text yourself ideas or jot it down the back of a receipt. Whatever you do, just keep creating. Catch your writing groove!

If you enjoyed what you read, share this guidance with your friends.

Stay in touch for more tips, writing prompts, and online writing courses.

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