

## FREEWRTING

### Purpose

Freewriting means writing in complete sentences in a short period of time without interrupting the flow of writing. Freewriting is putting thoughts down on paper without evaluating them before writing them down. In this respect, it is similar to brainstorming. Freewriting is a writing strategy that makes use of two principles from the didactics of writing: 1. writing is a motor for thinking and 2. it is impossible to be passive when writing. Either you write or you do not write. In freewriting, the inner thoughts of the learners/writers are put down on paper. Writing is a way to get all learners actively thinking about a topic. Freewriting increases the flow of thoughts and reduces the likelihood of a good idea being inadvertently censored by internal correction. Two ways of using freewriting have proven to be effective: In teaching-learning courses or as a method to support students in writing texts. (→see also X-Minute Paper).

Good uses in a teaching-learning event are at the beginning of the event to activate the participants' previous knowledge or to arouse their interest; or at the end of the event to enable the integration of the new information into one's own background experience by evaluating the information. As each learner simultaneously puts their own thoughts down on paper, everyone has the opportunity and time to sort out their own ideas before bringing them back to the plenary.

Freewriting can also be used very well to support students to get into writing and overcome the proverbial fear of the blank page.

### Directions

Teaching-learning event:

Communicate the time frame for the freewriting phase to the learners and set an alarm clock.

- Ask guiding questions to be answered in writing with the freewriting method,
- Ask to write whole sentences, not just key words,
- Clarify that what is written is private and will not be shared with anyone else,
- "Keep your hands moving" if nothing (more) comes to mind, circle pen on paper, or keep on writing "nothing more comes to mind, nothing more comes to mind..."

If you are aiming for a discussion, give time to read through what you have written and let students decide what they want to share with the plenary.

Especially when doing it for the first time in a group: give space to reflect on the exercise!

### Parameters

Group size:	Any number of participants, even large lecture hall settings
Time required:	3 minutes plus (approx. 7) depending on prompts
Setup:	flexible
Materials:	pen and paper

### Helpful Tips

Guiding questions at the beginning of a course could be:

- "What interests me most about today's topic is..."
- "Today's topic is related to last week's in terms of..."
- "What I find critical about today's topic is..."

Guiding questions for evaluation at the end of a unit could be:

- "What was particularly interesting for me was..."
- "It would have been better for me if... because...."
- "However, I still wonder..."

Guiding questions for "starting to write" could be:

- "What interests me most about the topic is..."
- "This has special reference to..."
- "Previous research has shown that..."
- "The argumentation XY does not convince me because..."

Online  
Implemen-  
tation

Can be used anywhere. In online settings it can be helpful to allow students to turn off the cameras so they do not feel they are being watched.

Adapted from:

Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing Without Teachers*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford UP.

Bolker, J (1998). *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

Cross, K. Patricia; Angelo, Thomas A. *Classroom Assessment Techniques. A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



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