

Seven Simple Tricks for Becoming a More Creative Writer

Worksheet

This is the worksheet for the seminar, which you can find in audio and transcript format at: www.writershuddle.com/seminars/sep2017.

We're all creative ... regardless of how artistic or colourful we might be! Even if writing is your only "creative" thing (it is for me), you've still got a lot of creative potential just waiting to be tapped.

These tricks can make it easier:

#1: Use a Prompt

"Write about anything" tends to make writers freeze up! A prompt or starting point (like "write about a 12 year old girl who wants revenge on someone") can spark ideas straight away.

You can use prompts for blogging as well as for fiction: I've put links to some good sources of prompts at the end of this worksheet.

#2: Use a Constraint

A constraint is like a prompt, but it tells you what *not* to do. E.g. "write without using the letter E" or "write without using any form of the verb 'to be'". Using a constraint forces you to be more creative about your choice of language, and can break you out of habitual patterns.

#3: Draw on Real Life

If you write fiction, don't make things up when you don't have to! You can set your stories in places you've been to and use locations you've visited (e.g. pubs, restaurants, parks). If you're using a setting you've not been to, Google Maps is a great source of details.

With non-fiction, you might use your own experience in the form of an anecdote or by brainstorming the things that *you* wanted to know about your specialist area when you started out.

#4: Get Inspired by Something Else You've Read

You might have come across the idea of a “swipe file” for copywriters and freelancers – where the writer saves good examples of copy they've read.

All of us are informed by what we've read. E.g. you might want to explore a particular character archetype or dynamic that you've come across. You can deliberately read for inspiration (e.g. if your novel tackles sibling relationships and grinding poverty, look for other stories – or memoir and non-fiction – dealing with those themes).

#5: Use a Piece of Music, Art, Sculpture...

Sometimes, a story can be inspired by a non-written form of art. You might pick a song, a piece of music, a painting, a sketch, a photograph, a sculpture, or anything at all that speaks to you.

You may want to periodically go back to your chosen artwork for further inspiration as you write.

#6: Consider Combining Ideas

Sometimes, two ideas that are a bit flat or sketchy on their own can work well when combined.

For instance, perhaps you're thinking of two possible stories:

- Contemporary fiction about a 35 year old single woman who desperately wants to have a child.
- SF story set on a remote space station.

The first is a common situation, and the second is a setting that's been done plenty of times ... but combining the two could make for an interesting story.

With blogging, combining two ideas could mean bringing together two parts of your life – e.g. a few months after my eldest was born, I wrote a blog post titled [Eight Ways Writing a Novel is Like Becoming a Parent](#).

#7: Look for an Unusual Take on a Character or Situation

Pick a character stereotype and flip it around. For instance, Buffy the Vampire Slayer came about because Joss Whedon wanted to write about a blonde cheerleader who *didn't* get eaten by the monsters.

Exercise:

Choose one of the tricks from above, and give yourself some time to simply play around with ideas and being creative. You might want to get away from your desk or usual place of work, and you might want to try writing using a different medium (e.g. write on paper if you normally use a computer).

Further Reading and Useful Resources

Prompts:

[101 Fabulous Blog Topic Ideas](#), Molly Greene, Molly-Greene.com

Loads of prompts to choose from here, handily split up into different categories.

[50 Flash Fiction Prompts](#), John Matthew Fox, Book Fox

These prompts, split by genre, would work perfectly well for longer short stories, not just flash pieces. They could even spark off a novel.

Blog posts:

[Ways Writers Can Spark Creativity](#), C.S. Lakin, Live Write Thrive

Lots of good advice here, plus some suggested techniques (some of which overlap with material from the seminar).

[How to Be More Creative in Your Writing](#), Melissa Donovan, Writing Forward

Some handy links here, plus helpful thoughts in general about creativity and how it's not innate.