

# Learn to Write — WRITE! —

A DIY Writer's Companion



A DIYHomeschooler Handy-Mom Tool

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## **Introduction**

Many people (writers or not) have questions about writers and writing. Many times young people have questions that sound more like, Why do I need to do this? And their question is very astute.

There is an obvious problem with the way writing is taught today. It isn't caught. There are those who would argue writing cannot even be taught. We teach the grammar and mechanics of writing, but those are the tools of writing not the actual writing itself. So it isn't surprising that students come away wondering when they will ever need to know what a predicate adjective is, or how being able to identify a participle phrase plays a role in their future.

So how can writing be taught? Or can it?

The bottom line is that writers write. In their writing, they grow, they improve their craft. By approaching writing as an art and craft, this book will help students improve their writing.

Working through examples and challenges, students of writing will engage with their writing.

Of course, this means that to use this book, the reader needs to be writing.

In the process, it is hoped that readers will:

- Find answers to the question: Why do we write?
- Become inspired to pursue the art of writing.
- Learn how to write common forms of writing (poetry, short stories, essays, etc.).
- Brush up on the mechanics of writing.
- Take away and implement ideas for improving their writing.

So grab a notebook and let's write!

## What if I don't have anything to write?

Start by writing something every day. At one point in time, there was a push against this accepted cornerstone of good writing. Hogwash. Everyone can write something every day. SOMETHING!

This point has been covered earlier in various places. But in summary, to make it easier to find things to write these tips may help:

- Read extensively. There needs to be an input to have an output. Reading is the other side of writing. Provide lots of fodder for the mind. Quality does matter here. What you read will influence your writing style.

*Growing out of the skill of reading is that of writing.*

—Dr. Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*<sup>23</sup>

*Read all the good books you can, and avoid nearly all magazines.*

—C. S. Lewis, *On Writing and Writers*<sup>24</sup>

- So that you are tuned in to your thoughts, avoid passive inputs such as television, etc. The idea is to read to think. When we are being entertained we are less likely to pay close enough attention to reach understanding.

*[That writing is no longer the sole possession of the English teacher but is an organic part of how every subject is taught] is an idea I like very much. It establishes at an early age the fact that writing is a*

*form of thinking, whatever the subject.... I thought of how often the act of writing even the simplest document — a letter, for instance — had clarified my half-formed ideas. Writing and thinking and learning were the same process.*

—William Zinsser, *Writing to Learn*<sup>25</sup>

- Make time to think. We need time to process all of that input, and to make connections. This might mean taking a walk (a favorite of Dickens and other authors) or scheduling downtime.

*Thinking is the foundation of writing.*

—William Zinsser, *Writing to Learn*<sup>26</sup>

- Avoid digital distractions. It is very difficult to have a cogent thought with the phone buzzing or notifications going off every few minutes. Turn off the noise. Focusing requires our full attention.



### ***Challenge: Get Unstuck***

Try one or more of the following ideas:

- Copy something. (You can do this every day until you do have something to write.) What are you reading? Find a favorite passage. Copy examples of great writing.
- Transcribe something. This could be an instructional video, a sermon, or even a song.
- Rewrite a poem as prose. Does the poem tell a story? Tell the story in your own words.
- Write an outline for a nonfiction article you recently read (or use an encyclopedia).
- Change a work written in past tense to present tense or vice versa.
- Describe a place using the five senses.
  - What do you see?
  - What do you hear?
  - What do you smell?
  - What do you feel?
  - Taste? Metaphorically?
- Change a passage of dialog into a tale told by a narrator (3<sup>rd</sup> person).

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