

Creative Writing: Strategies and Tips

Tips to spark creativity and get your projects moving:

Journal writing

“Morning pages” - Set your clocks 30 minutes early; get up and in longhand, write a stream-of-consciousness flow of whatever comes to mind. Do not reread these pages or allow anyone else to read them. These pages are not “art;” they are not “real” writing. They simply open you up to “siphoning off the mind’s surface so that we can get to the deeper thoughts and impulses that lie” beneath (Cameron, *The Artist’s Way Workbook*, 1). This helps us to slow down, to connect with our emotions, intentions, and creativity.

Activity: Do a 2-minute nonstop free-writing.

Make it portable

Make a list at the beginning of the week to decide what projects you want to work on throughout the week. Start one in your journal, and add to it whenever you have a few spare minutes (in the doctor’s waiting room, at your lunch break, a few minutes before bed, etc.). Use your iPad, laptop, or old-fashioned pen and paper and carry your creative project with you.

Artist “Dates”

Artist dates come in many forms, but, according to Julia Cameron, there are two guidelines: 1) they must be scheduled weekly, and 2) artist dates encourage us to play, to receive, to be fed. An artist’s date might include (but is not limited to): wandering a great bookstore or library, getting a relaxing massage, taking the train to the Art Institute, playing with puppies, cleaning out stables, or visiting a thrift store.

Activity: Discuss with a neighbor 5 ideas for artist dates that appeal to you.

Walks

Walking is a simple activity, but can be a powerful tool to help nudge you out of habitual thinking and loosen up creativity.

Activity: Try this: If you have an idea but aren’t sure where it’s going (or where it’s going next), take a 45- minute walk. Think through your idea and see if by the end of your walk, you have more clarity and can take the next step.

Give yourself permission

Turn the “editor” or “censor” off. Love these tongue-in-cheek ideas that sabotage your artistic endeavors from Julia Cameron, *How To Avoid Making Art*:

- Demand 15 hours of free time to create, so you can ignore the 15 minutes you’ve got.
- Tell yourself you’re too old (or young) to do the things you love.
- Think of all the other books that have been written. Why write this one?
- Obsess about how painting a tulip means you are an unfit parent abandoning your child to pursue your selfish dream.
- Cultivate a relationship with a negative and time consuming person. Make them your best friend.
- Assume that your dream will be much too expensive and beyond your reach.
- Slide into despair rather than take one small exploratory action.

Activity: Write the top three reasons why you put off making your art. Scratch through them and turn them into positive actions instead.