



NEW WRITING
NORTH
YOUNG WRITERS



Poetry from Free Writing

Warm Up:

Free write for 7 minutes. If you are new to free writing, it is when you put your pen to paper for a set period of time and write without stopping. The guidelines are:

1. Don't stop writing. Don't think: it's when we stop and think that our inner critique can say things like you're rubbish at writing. This stops us writing! So just write.
2. Do not worry about spelling or grammar.
3. Write whatever comes to your head, even if it's I don't know what to write anymore. You can keep writing the same word or phrase over and over (sometimes this can become a powerful repetition). Just keep writing, until your time is up.
4. Include the senses in your writing. What can you smell, taste, hear, see, feel?
5. Remember that nothing you write is wrong.

I free write every morning reflecting on the day before. I tend to rant about stuff or people that have irritated me and find it a good way to get rid of my frustrations! If you would like a prompt before you start your free writing, try writing one of these at the top of your page:

Today I heard on the news that...

If I could change one thing in my life it would be...

I was so happy when...

I really appreciated my friend when they...

If these prompts don't appeal, find a book and open it at any page, point at a word, and use that word to begin your free writing.

Get Inspired:

Before you try shaping your free writing into a poem, get inspired! Find out about six young spoken word artists and their views on poetry by watching the *Meet 'The Future'* video on BBC Bitesize [here](#).

If you were being interviewed for this film, what would you say poetry means to you? Do you think it's exciting and expressive, or old and boring?!

Listen to the poems themselves too – are there any lines that you particularly like? Write these down and keep them as inspiration for later.

Give it a Try:

Look back at your piece of free writing. Highlight the words or lines you particularly like and rewrite them on another piece of paper, mixing up the order if you want to. Do the words already tell a story, or now that you've taken them out of your free writing, do they seem to say something else? Spend some time adding new words and slowly building up your poem, seeing what stories, images or themes emerge. You now have the start of a poem!

Build on this to create a three-verse poem with a repeated line. Use the example below for inspiration, which came from the free writing prompt *If I could change one thing in my life it would be...*

If
If I could, I would
Fly
Be immortal
Be an animal

If I could, I would
Be a better friend
Stop cruelty to animals
Stop the coronavirus

If I could, I would
Stop bullying
Choose wiser choices
Be a photographer

By Megan

If you're struggling with what to write in your poem, start with a word wall. This means writing down any words that come to mind about the chosen topic or theme of your poem. This is a bit like free writing and will help you when forming your poem.

Editing

Once you have your poem in three verses, try editing it by asking yourself the below questions:

- Does your first line grab the audience's attention?
- Have you been specific enough? What further details could you add?
- Are the verbs strong enough? Verbs push the action in a poem, how do you want that to happen? Running, screaming, fighting are all relatively vague, used verbs - try using a thesaurus to find ones more suited to what you are trying to describe e.g. barrelling, caterwauling, scuffling.
- Have you used any metaphors or similes? Can you change any of your similes to metaphors?
- POEMS DON'T HAVE TO RHYME. So if a rhyme isn't working don't force it.
- Is anything confusing or unclear? Is information missing, or are you telling us too much?
- Have you removed any unnecessary repetition? What is the purpose of any repetition you are using?

- How many abstract nouns have you used (things you cannot touch e.g. sadness, justice, politics). Could you use more concrete nouns instead (things you can touch e.g. a desk, an iris)?
- What tense is your poem in? What person is your poem in? Could changing either/both make your poem more interesting or effective?
- Can you sum up your poem in one sentence? Does that sentence hold a valuable or interesting idea? What has changed by the end of your poem?

Challenge Yourself:

Now that you've written and edited your poem, can you have a go at performing it? Try reading it aloud first to explore voice, rhythm or line breaks. If there's a section you're finding really hard to say, rework it until it sounds right.

Once you're happy with your poem, use the tips below to turn it into a spellbinding spoken word performance! You could try filming your work or performing your poem to the people you live with.

Stance:

When reciting a poem, you should stand facing your audience, in a balanced stance with your feet approximately shoulder width apart. Avoid swaying side to side, shifting your weight foot to foot, or crossing/uncrossing your ankles! Your aim is to deliver your poem with as few distractions for the audience to observe as possible. An exception to the balanced stance would be if you wish to emphasize a point, for example, by stamping your foot.

Gestures and movement:

Your hands should rest at your sides in a relaxed manner. As easy as this sounds, it takes practice in order to not grab at your clothes, ball up your hands, or fold them across your chest. Try to only gesture appropriately to the words you're saying and then return your hands to your sides. For most of the poem you should aim to maintain the balanced stance without much movement. If a part of the poem lends itself to movement (e.g. bending down, bowing etc.) it can be effective, but remember that these moments of movement should be purposeful and planned to avoid being distracting.

Eye Contact:

Your eyes should maintain contact with your audience. This also takes lots of practice, as it's hard to avoid looking up, down or to the sides. However, when you look away from your audience (except for dramatic effect) you are giving them permission to look away from you!

It's also distracting for the audience if your eyes scan over them too quickly. Engage your audience by maintaining longer eye contact with your audience members if possible. (Tip: try not to maintain eye contact for too long with any members of your audience who might make you laugh!).

The Performance:

Walk confidently to the place where you will deliver your poem and stand in a balanced stance with your hands down at your sides. Establish eye contact with your audience members, wait until they are all silent, then begin with the title of the poem and after a brief pause, the poem itself. This is not a time to giggle or appear nervous! You can feel nervous but act confident and the audience will never know that you were apprehensive.

This workshop was devised by Sky Hawkins for New Writing North Young Writers.



Sky Hawkins aka The Word Bird is a dyslexic spoken word artist and has been ranting on stages and winning the odd slam in the north east and beyond for over a decade now.

Sky discovered her talent for writing and performance poetry, through writing about her noisy neighbour across the road on the council estate she raised her son as a single parent.

She won The English National Youth Arts Network North East Regional Youth Arts Champion in 2010 and in 2018 won runner up with Yorkshire council as Best Community Project, and has been published in various magazines

Sky is committed to encouraging others to have their voices heard. She considers it essential that young people and vulnerable adults are listened to and uses her skills to nurture the performer and poet in all of them. Her experience of life in the care system, and the challenges of being a single parent, inform her work and place her in a unique position of empathy and understanding.

“Sky is a powerful, engaging, funny performer and her powerful poems which are real stories which need to be told, from a voice which needs to be heard”

Kate Fox, Stand up poet and Radio 4 regular

New Writing North Young Writers is a programme for young people aged 12-19. We run creative writing groups, masterclasses and programmes in schools across the North East. We support young people to express their ideas, to work with professional writers and artists, to create and share new work, and to meet other young writers.

We would love to read your writing! Share it with us on social media using #writingfromhome or by emailing youngwriters@newwritingnorth.com. Search for New Writing North Young Writers on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter, where we will also be sharing regular writing prompts. Each week we will select a Young Writer of the Week whose work will be shared on our channels.

Find other writing workshops and much more on our website www.newwritingnorth.com

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Supported using public funding by
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