



T U T O R S ' T I P S

Inspiring Reluctant Writers

When we write, we are committing to paper thoughts, ideas and information for an audience. Writing is a form of communication that reveals many things about the author. Some people enjoy writing, as it can be shared with others and often gets a positive response.

Why is it so many adults are reluctant to write?

There may be many reasons, but some of the most common are:

- There is rarely a need to write.
- Ways have been found to avoid writing.
- Writing skills have become rusty.
- A bad experience with writing in the past has taken away confidence.
- There is an expectation that writing must be correct the first time.
- There is a fear of making spelling mistakes.
- The writer is uncertain about sentence structure.
- The writer has difficulty composing thoughts in a structured way.
- A focus on the mechanics of writing makes composition difficult.
- The writer is uncertain about the appropriate style and structure.
- Poor handwriting skills make the writer embarrassed.

Writing is a very complex task. It is different from reading. Reading is understanding what someone else has written – you interpret their meaning. With writing, the meaning has to come from you. It not only involves the mechanics of forming letters, but also the composition of ideas. The writer then must record those thoughts in a way that others can readily understand, using their knowledge of spelling and grammar.

How then can reluctant writers be inspired to write?

Tutors should keep these points in mind:

- Establish a trusting relationship in which the student is prepared to have a go.
- Set small achievable goals.
- Make it easy to write.
- Praise what is good and ignore the rest until editing time.
- Use the student's ideas, not yours.
- Encourage the student to talk about the ideas first.
- Respond with interest to the ideas afterwards.
- Model the writing process. Demonstrate that messy handwriting, spelling mistakes, crossing out and rewriting are often the norm.
- For beginners, be a scribe, then let the student make a copy.

Ideas for Writing

Hobbies or
interest

Job
Applications

Recipes

Notes

FORMS

Letters

Post Cards

Lists

Reading
Log

CARDS

Memories

Diary
entries

POEMS

Instructions

Personal
recounts

Personal
recounts

Descriptions of
events, pets,
family members

Pre-writing Stage

Find a reason to write. This should be relevant to the needs and interests of the student. It should not be too long or complex. You want the student to have success and grow in confidence.

Use visual stimuli such as pictures, drawings, videos, photos or real objects.

Allow time for the thoughts to incubate.

Do lots of talking about the topic before any writing is done. Questioning and discussion will clarify the information and help put it into an orderly structure.

Look at examples of the same genre to see how others have presented information.

Talk about the purpose and audience of the genre.

The Stages of Writing

Starting Stage	Editing Stage	Finishing Stage
Beginning writers can have a scribe. This frees their mind from the mechanics of writing and allows them to focus on the composition.	Start by ensuring the writing fits the purpose and the audience. Make changes to the style and tone if necessary.	Once again, relate the final presentation to the purpose and the audience. Decide on the look and layout that is required.
Write ideas down in note form after they are discussed. Key words and phrases can be linked together later. Numbering the ideas in sets is a quick way to organise the main points.	Check that the information makes sense. Is more detail or description needed? Should some sentences or paragraphs be rearranged or deleted?	Make a clean copy.
Brain storm important points, then make a mind map.	Are the sentences varied in length, vocabulary and structure?	Neat hand-writing is often sufficient.
Get started any way that suits. Remember that the first draft will alter quite a bit before the writing is completed. You can make changes later on.	Is the spelling correct? Check that word ending are complete and that no words have been left out. Make sure the correct homonym has been used.	Sometimes a typed copy is more appropriate.
Don't worry about mistakes. Focus on getting the ideas down on paper in some form. Many students find editing at this point stops them thinking creatively.	Look at the punctuation. Be sure the sentence punctuation is right. Check commas, quotation marks and apostrophes.	Give the final product to someone to read. Get a reaction. Encourage the student to see writing as an enjoyable experience.
	Is the grammar correct? Make sure sentences are complete. Look at tenses and plurals.	

See the QCAL website to download past copies of Tutor Tips.

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A Writing Plan for Students

What do good writers do? How do they compose?

It is like an iceberg – 7/8 is under the surface.



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FINAL DRAFT

- Decide on the look you want.
- Make a clean copy.

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PROOF READING

- Check spelling, punctuation and layout.

EDITING

- Pretend you are the audience.
- Read it critically.
- Does it make good sense?
- Is it clear?
- If not, make changes until you are satisfied you have said what you want to say.

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FIRST DRAFT

- How will I word it?
(write on every second line)
- How will I set it out? (format, conventions)
- Say it to yourself before you write it down.
- Ask yourself – Does it sound right?
- Does it flow?
- Is it clear and concise in tone?

PREPARING TO WRITE

- Think about the purpose of writing.
- Write a brief plan.
- Write some notes or key words.
- Look at some other similar writing – how has it been done?
- Talk to someone about your ideas or thoughts.
- What do you know about?
- What do you need to write?

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