



What Is a Writer's Notebook?

A writer's notebook is all about you and the way you experience the world around you. It is a place where writers explore. There are two whole universes for you to explore- the one on the inside, and the physical one on the outside. It is a place for you to get your thoughts and feelings down, ask questions, make observations, explore topics, reflect and remember, scribble, sketch and draw, make lists and write, write, write. It is a place for you to take risks and try new things, practice different types of writing and use your inner and outer world for inspiration. Your notebook is also a place where you look back on the things you have written and find patterns as well as ideas for new things to write about.

“Your Writer's Notebook can work as an alarm clock to remind you to *wake up* and to *pay attention* to the world.”

Things We Might Put In Our Writer's Notebooks

- Life...yours
- Lists of all things
- Notes and reminders
- Memories & emotions
- Five Sense Snapshots: Describe the Sights, Sounds, Noises, Tastes and/or Smells
- Drawings, photographs, thoughtshots, fragments, scribbles and sketches
- Postcards, lyrics
- Questions
- Poems
- Favorite Quotes
- Wonderings
- Overheard conversations
- Interesting Dialogue or text from a book newspaper or magazine
- Dreams & Unforgettable stories
- Special events
- Favorite places
- Reactions and opinions on a book, movie, or game
- Descriptions of people we know
- Our thoughts
- Observations from the world
- Conversations with ourselves from inside our heads
- Opinions on issues and situations
- Images that stick in our mind
- Freewriting: writing everything that comes to mind without picking up your pen from the page...when freewriting we don't filter out words that come to mind or worry about spelling, grammar & punctuation
- Thoughts and reflections on our own writing



Introduction to Writer's Notebook: Living a Writing Life:

Stage 1-Becoming a Writer: Using observations, lists and freewriting to "paint a picture of the world"

- **Freewriting from a "quote":** Choose a quote and make a list of things this quote makes you think of.
- **Heartmap:** Draw a Map of the people, places, things and ideas you know and care about the most. Start in the center, placing the most important person/ place/thing and use just a few words and drawings per section.
- **"I am a...."/ List of things that make you who you are:** Draw a giant "I" on your entry page and fill it in with a list of things that define and describe you.
- **Observations/Noticings :** Think of something you experienced that is memorable and make a list of things you noticed and observed using your five senses. (What you saw, heard, smelled, tasted and felt)
- **Writing off a Photograph or Image:** Look at a photograph and make a list of observations and words using the five senses. Take your list and find a seed idea to write off of
- **My Interesting Nouns Collection:** (List of people, places and Things) Make a list of interesting nouns. Pick one of these to write off of.
- **My Interesting Adjectives:** Make a list of interesting adjectives (describing words). Pick one of these to write off of.
- **My Interesting Verbs Collection:** Make a list of interesting verbs (action words). Pick one of these to write off of.
- **An Important Person:** Think about a person who is important to you. List as many small moments as you can & then write about one of these moments.
- **Seasonal Word Banks (Summer, Fall, Winter and Spring Words):** Pick a season and make a list of words that come to mind. Divide these into nouns (Person, place or thing), adjectives (describing words) & verbs (actions). Pick a seed idea from this list of words and write off of it
- **Things I know a lot about:** Make a list of things you know a lot about (people, places, favorite things). Choose one of the things on this list and write off the seed idea.
- **Things I know how to do, make and be:** Make a list of things you know how to do, how to make and how to be. Choose one and write off the seed idea
- **Inspiration from a place that is meaningful to you:** List some clear, small moments related to that place. Choose one of those small moments and freewrite, write a poem or a story about it.
- **I Remember List:** Make a list of times you were surprised, something unusual happened, a time you achieved something, a time something unforgettable happened, and any memorable adventures you have been on. Pick something from this list to use as a seed to write off of.
- **I Wonder/List:** Make a list of things you wonder about or questions you have.
- **Writing from a Word:** Provide the class a word or let them choose from previous entries and pick a word that they want to freewrite off of.



Types of Writing:

- Freewriting, Lists and Observations (Non-structured Writing)
- Personal Narrative
- Informative Writing
- Memoir
- Poetry
- Fiction Writing
- Persuasive Writing
- Personal Essay
- Literary Essay
- Research Writing
- Letter Writing

What do students do with what they write in their notebook? What is the end result?

- Look through your notebook to see how you are growing and changing as a writer: How has your writing changed? How has writing changed you and the way you see the world?
- Return to previous entries and reflect on what was written: respond to writing with new ideas and thoughts in the margins of the paper and on post-its
- Re-read and highlight things that stand outlook for ideas of things to expand on and turn into a draft using a specific type of writing
- Revise and Edit drafts by using discussions with peers and teacher
- Share “published writing with teachers, parents and/or friends

What do I need to do in order to have a successful writer's notebook?

Notebook writers learn to observe carefully (by using all of their senses), gather interesting information, reflect on experiences, record life's big and small events, explore creative ideas, take risks, and write from the heart.

