

4 Easy Tips to Sidestep Perfectionism & Rediscover Writing Joy

Tip #1. Reframe “Writing” as “Playing”

Banish expectations—and perfectionism!—by changing external cues such as when, where, or how you approach writing. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Write at a different time of day.**

Some writers find writing first thing in the morning, before they've completely woken up, helps them to bypass their inner critic. Try writing while curled in in bed, first thing in the morning or last thing at night!

- **Write in a different location.**

Look for locations that are particularly inspiring—like a lovely park—or comfortable—like that sunny window seat or a favorite coffee shop. Experiment!

For more inspiration on taking your writing to new settings, check out “Who Else Wants to Take Writing on the Road This Summer?” [Part I](#) and [Part II](#).

- **Wear different clothes.**

What outfit says “I’m having fun” or “I’m relaxing here”? Don’t underestimate the power of these external cues to sidetrack your inner perfectionist!

- **Use different tools.**

It’s time to break out colored pens, markers, and whatever else gets your inner creative excited. Remember: time to play!

Tip #2. Remove Artificial Constraints

Check out your assumptions before you start writing, and you're sure to find a few unnecessary guardrails. Here are some ways to bend those unwritten "rules" you might be unconsciously following:

- ❑ **You don't have to write in chronological order.**
There's no rule that says you have to write scene 1 before scene 2—or even before scene 32. Skipping around in the story can let you write the scenes you're excited to write—which are sure to provide energy for writing other scenes as well.
- ❑ **You can write about the writing.**
Journaling about writing questions, character concepts, and plot problems is a great way to find your way through the tangle.
- ❑ **You can play with words.**
Your writing doesn't have to be limited to the text that will appear in the final document. Explore the way words sound and feel, the mood they evoke, their connotations and the way they fit up against one another. It counts!
- ❑ **You can create lists or perform other brainstorming exercises.**
For example, consider listing actions your character might take; words that fit a particular scene or setting; or potential rhymes you can use when crafting rhyming text.

Tip #3. Create Artificial Limits.

Paradoxically, imposing limits on yourself can sometimes be just as freeing as removing them. For me, limiting the amount of time I'm "allowed" to work on my project builds a sense of excitement and anticipation. You might also consider the following:

- ❑ **Limit the amount of time you will work.**
- ❑ **Limit the scope of what you'll write about.**
- ❑ **Limit the type of brainstorming you'll do.**

Tip #4. End With a Relaxing Break.

It's important to build some type of relaxing break into your schedule shortly after you finish your anti-perfectionism writing session. Why? First, you need to reward yourself.

But I'm a grownup, you're thinking. I don't need a gold star!

Actually, you *do* need a gold star. Your "rational self" may be a grownup, but you're trying to coax out a more childlike part of your psyche when you write—and that's the part of your brain that responds well to positive reinforcement. Reward yourself now, and your muse will be more likely to come out and play next time.



The second reason for taking a break? By doing so, you prime your mind for inspiration. When you're relaxed, your subconscious continues playing with ideas. Invite those "ah-ha!" moments by creating space for relaxation and mind-wandering in your schedule. Here are a few creativity-inducing break ideas for you:

- Take a hot bath or shower**
- Take a walk or run**
- Go for a swim**
- Soak in a hot tub**
- Meditate**
- Crochet**
- Work on a puzzle**
- Do yoga or Tai Chi**