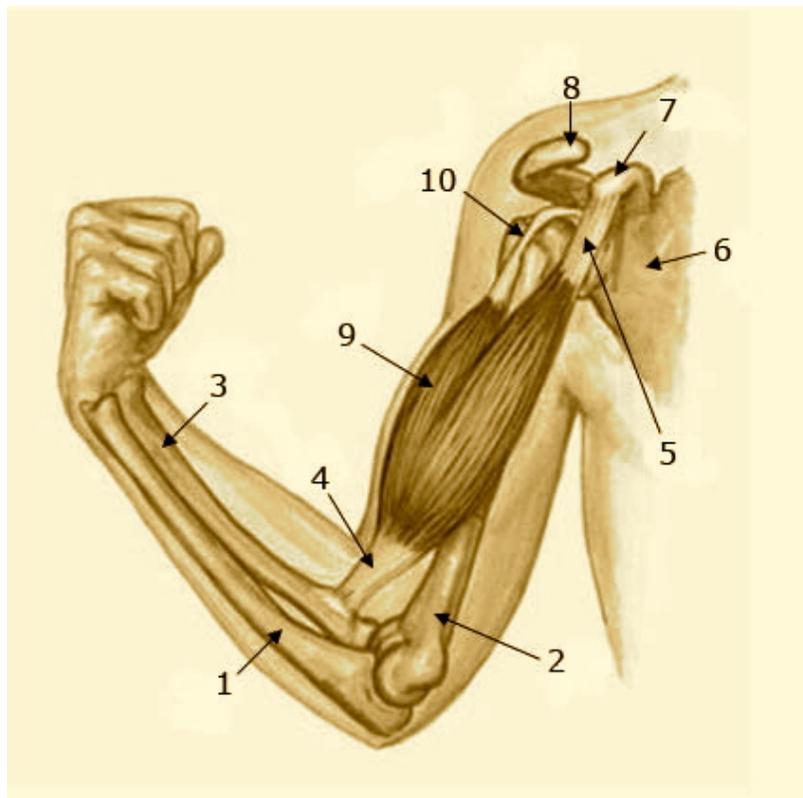


Hooray! It's time to get started on your...

10-Minute Writing Exercises for Muscles of Steel



42 exercises. 10 minutes a day. You can totally do this.

But first, a few words about freewriting ...

If you don't already have a way to generate new work quickly and freely, without self-censoring, I recommend that you try this method (adapted from the writer Natalie Goldberg):

- ❖ Set a timer. If you're new to this, start with 10 minutes. Later you can pump it up to 15, 20, 30...
- ❖ Keep the pen moving. No editing, no going backward, no stopping to choose the perfect turn of phrase. Keep going. You can always edit later, but for now, keep the energy alive and don't stop.
- ❖ Get specific. If you find yourself swimming at the surface, dive deeper: not just *red*, but *the toxic red of the non-organic strawberries from the supermarket that summer when the fieldworkers were marching for their rights*.
- ❖ If you get stuck, start a new sentence with, "What I really want to say is..." Do this as many times as necessary.
- ❖ Lose control. If you start one exercise and you find yourself writing something completely different, keep going; you're not doing it "wrong." The exercise is just a starting point - write whatever you need to write. Don't think. Writing is in your body & soul, not your head. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, &c. You are free to write JUNK. **Go for the jugular. If something scares you, write toward it.**

Keyword warmups

Use any of these on their own for easy 10-minute freewrites, or as helping words to keep you moving during the other exercises.

1. I remember / I don't remember
2. I want / I don't want
3. I know / I don't know
4. Give me / Don't give me
5. Remember how we ...
6. How could he/she/they/you/I ...
7. If only ...

Enter the six gateways

These exercises are designed to help you tap into all of your senses. They're great for generating deep description. Use them any time you feel your writing is getting too abstract or general.

8. **SOUND:** Listen to a piece of music and describe it for someone you love who is deaf.
9. **SIGHT:** Look at a painting or photograph. Describe it for someone you love who is blind.
10. **TASTE:** Drink a cold glass of water very slowly. Write. Eat a strawberry very slowly. Write.
11. **SMELL:** What your lover (bathroom) (grandfather) smells like.
12. **TOUCH:** With your non-writing hand, touch or hold an object out of your sight. With your writing hand, write the colors, smells, etc. that it *feels like*. Play with scale: Imagine how it would feel if your hand were a tiny molecule; if your hand were a god's, huge.
13. **SIXTH SENSE:** Read the mind of a stranger in a cafe. Write his/her fantasy; deepest fear; choice in underwear.
14. **SIXTH SENSE:** Look at a newspaper/magazine photograph. Write what the people in it are feeling.
15. **ALL THE SENSES:** The best ____ I ever had (meal, sex, moment?). Write this as a fully sensual experience, using all of your senses.
16. **ALL THE SENSES:** The worst ____ I ever had: same as above.

Freedom and fun

Try these when you want to loosen up and have a party on your pages.

17. Write with the sounds of words. Choose a sound and make phrases without worrying about whether it makes sense. Example: *I lie in my mud pie under the sky ... See where you go.*
18. Choose an object & describe it in the least obvious way possible. Example: a red dress—describe it as a bird, and don't use the word "red." Use any object for free association.
19. Lie. Be outrageous. Accuse beautiful things of being ugly; describe how ugly they are & vice versa.
20. You can get away with anything on paper. Write, *I wish I could get away with...*
21. Make a list of big statements. Huge ones. Example: *I am the one and only God.* Write passionate extrapolations/proofs of each one.
22. Practice randomness: Make each sentence completely unrelated to the previous.

Courage and depth

Ready to get to the core of your story? Dive in, and remember to breathe.

23. Go back in time to the moment of your conception. Describe it from the point of view of any single character or element of the scene.
24. Write a plea of encouragement or discouragement to your parents to have you.
25. True Desire I: Place one hand on a part of your body that may want to speak. Keep it there as you take 10 deep breaths; use your breath to become that body part. Write from its point of view: *I want*.
26. True Desire II: Do the same as above, but this time, imagine your mother's body; perhaps her womb, perhaps as a girl or young woman, before she had you. Keep your hand on that body part as you take 10 deep breaths. Write from its point of view: *I want*.
27. List 100 sins. *The worst things I've done. The things I never should have done.*
28. List 100 unrecognized acts of sainthood. *What I gave, and gave up.*
29. Think of a religion, philosophy, belief system or community you belong/ed to, now or in the past. Write: *How to be a bad _____ (lesbian) (Catholic) (progressive).*

With a person in mind

Choose a character, real or imagined. You can even choose yourself, perhaps at a different age.

30. If you could give this person anything, what would it be? How/where/etc.?
31. Write (invent) the person's dreams.
32. Create a dream landscape where you and the person meet or do not meet.
33. Write a 10-minute sentence about the person, no periods.
34. Envision the person looking at a mirror: What does s/he see, feel? (If it's you, do it!)
35. Follow Allen Ginsberg's recipe for a Heaven/Earth/Human poem:
Do 1 minute meditation outdoors under the sky, 1 minute meditation sitting on the ground, 1 minute meditation thinking of a person. Then write a piece in 3 parts. Go.
36. Write a person's last thoughts, as s/he is dying.

An overnigher

These two go together like peaches and cream.

37. Before going to sleep, list 10 words that you love or that feel wondrous to you. Then write 10 minutes, as if recording a dream. Make up the dream as you go. Use all 10 words.
38. Go to sleep, keeping your writing tools near the bed. When you wake up, write 10 minutes of whatever comes. It may or may not be related; enjoy the continuity or contrast.

Recipe for making your own writing exercises

You're a pro now! Here are some ideas to keep the momentum going.

39. Start anywhere, where some energy/spark is, right in this moment. Take it to its logical conclusion. Or, go to its opposite, and explore the tension.
40. Look around. Choose someone/something and make a game (exercise) out of it. Describe it to someone from another planet. Write from its point of view. Write about it from your mother's (lover's) (enemy's) point of view. Place it elsewhere in the time-space continuum where it will create havoc. Think about why someone would actively ignore it. Make it huge or tiny; make it god, and imagine the society that worships it. Make it the most despised thing in its society. Play, intimately, with it.
41. When you read something you love, be inspired. Write an homage, not on the same topic, but adapting the writer's approach to a different topic.
42. Make lists of topics, sounds, memories, colors, rules to break. Keep them in the back of your notebook. When you sit down to write, choose one.

Find 10 minutes. Go.

Want more help? Ready to transform your creative dreams and drafts into gorgeous finished works? Do you need a companion, a supportive voice – **maybe even a fairy godmother** – on the journey from idea to actualization? See [my coaching page](#) for tips and upcoming courses, or request your FREE 30-minute coaching consultation: minal@minalhajratwala.com.