



KESTREL
THEATRE COMPANY

Kestrel Theatre Playwriting Workshops

Week One

GETTING STARTED WRITING

Welcome to Week One. Lovely to have you here. Hope you're all good. All you need is some paper and a pen. And that's it.

Let's get started.

So as this is Week One, this workshop will concentrate on you, as a person, and your writing, from a personal place. It's important to say that the exercises contained in this workshop will be completely individual to you, and only you. I find with writing I spend so much time in a made up world, I completely forget about myself, and my own history and experiences, which is where all writing that comes out of your head starts from. Any kind of writing feels difficult and daunting, sometimes. The prospect of a blank page is the most familiar source of anxiety for any writer - how am I going to fill it with words? Where do I start? I think it's getting your head into a place where you are just writing for writing's sake is the best possible place to start. It may feel stupid and pointless, but writing without any worry about "where is this going?" is one of the most freeing things you can do. It means you're not being self critical, because you're not allowing yourself any boundaries in which this feeling can emerge. With all these things in mind, let's have a go at this:

Exercise One - Free-Writing

Have ready something that you can keep time with. Then take your pen and hover it over the page. When you get to the end of this paragraph you are reading there will be a word. When you read this word, start writing about it and don't pause for **five minutes**. Don't worry about what you're writing, just write. **Don't stop to think**. Just start writing. If it feels stupid, just stick with it. Keep your pen on the page and keep writing. Don't worry about punctuation or anything like that. This is a stream of consciousness. The words will go nowhere. Just write. Ready? The word is a colour: **BLUE**.

Five minutes...

...and done.

Good job. That might have felt annoying. Or frustrating. Or the writing didn't "flow" that easily. If that was the case then have another go. And choose another thing to write about. But keep it simple. Things like - football, what you had for breakfast, a dream. It might take a few minutes, but you'll find your head goes to a place where all you're doing is writing, and not thinking about writing. This is a nice place to be.

Now you've written some words, let's focus more on you, as a writer.

Exercise Two - Questions

This is a really simple exercise. You'll find a list of questions with this workshop on pages 4, 5 and 6. Literally all you have to do is go through every question and write down an answer to them. The questions range from childish, to slightly more thoughtful. Some are stupid. Some are heavier. But just write down as much or as little as you want for each one. The exercise is designed to make you think about you, which is something, I think, we forget to do a lot of the time. And it's a nice thing to do sometimes. So have a go. No time limit on this exercise. Just go through the questions and on a separate piece of paper, write down the answers. Do don't need to write the question down, just the answer. Have a go.

Done?

Well done. How'd you find that? I found a notebook recently which had my answers to that same exercise that I did years ago. I'd forgot I still had the notebook. Reading them back was kind of strange. I felt like a completely different person to how I was when I did it for the first time, I was still me, but time had moved on, changing how I thought about the world and myself. Maybe put that piece of paper away somewhere. Maybe you'll find it years from now. It's a strange but oddly profound thing, seeing a little bit of your history written, just for you.

So now we've moved inside our heads, let stay there for a bit longer and move onto the next exercise...

Exercise Three - I Remember

This exercise is similar to the first one we did, but more focused as it has one rule to follow. It's the same style though, so it's really important to not ever pause to think. **Just keep writing.** Worth remembering to never be self critical in these exercises, they are still just writing for the sake of writing. This is important.

So take your pen and a new piece of paper. And now we're going to write for five minutes constantly. The rule this time, though, is that every sentence starts with "I remember...". So without pausing to think, just keeping writing things you remember from your life. Literally anything from your life. From when you were small, right up to now. What you'll find is your brain will start making random connections. The memories won't be in order. That's good. We're not interested in order. We're interested in memory and things inside of your head. Don't overthink it. Just go. It will look roughly like this:

I remember being pushed on a swing by my brother. I remember drinking Fanta in the sun. I remember jumping over a wave and getting a load of sea water in my mouth. I remember cutting my hand open on a rock. I remember breaking into a school on a Saturday to skateboard with my mate Scott. I remember my friend breaking off a piece of a Mars bar and giving it to me one breaktime...

That's some of mine. I didn't pre plan where to start - I just started writing. Do the same now, for five minutes. Keep going, don't take your pen off the page, keep going. What you'll find is you'll think of the next memory while writing the one before. This is how it should be. It's a strange feeling. But a good one. And useful. Ready?

Go.

Five minutes...

...and done.

Nice work. Now do that again. Another five minutes. Exactly the same. Ready? Don't think.

Go.

And relax. Good work. By now you should have a good amount of things written down, all starting with "I remember...". Have a look back over what you've written. And now just have a think about those memories and whether any surprised you when you thought about them - one's you might not have thought about for years. One's you thought you'd forgotten. One's you didn't want to think about but wrote them down because they came into your head. Have a look back over them. **Now circle three of them.** And then write them down again on another piece of paper. And we'll do the last exercise of the workshop.

Exercise Four - Writing Memory

Have a look at your three memories. Think about them. We're now going to write one of them down. Choose the one that you feel most connected too. You might not know why you feel connected to this particular one, but you just do. It's a feeling. Like writing is. A feeling, not a science.

So you've got your memory. Now the exercise is to just write it down in a paragraph, as if you were there. Doesn't have to be long. But try to evoke a sense of place and time when writing it down. Remember the **feeling**. So if I choose the memory of breaking into a school to skateboard with my mate Scott I could write something like this:

Scott looks at me and smiles. I'm sort of scared. The fence is massive and I'm shit at climbing. I think I'm going to fall and break both my legs. I tell Scott this and he tells me to not be a dickhead and climb. He throws his skateboard over, we hear it smack loudly on hot summer tarmac on the other side. Then he climbs. He goes up over the wall easily. I scramble up. Get to the top. I can see the whole town from here. It looks so small...

And I would keep going. But you get the idea. So have a go. And remember the **feeling** of that moment. Paint a picture of that moment with words. Ready?

Go.

And once you've done put your pen down and relax. Well done. You've written a lot. And that's good. Read over your memory. If you want, you can do the same for the other two. But take it easy, now. Writing uses a lot of mental energy. It's important to know when to stop. Which is now.

I hope you found some things helpful here. It's a starting point. We've more weeks to go. But the main thing for week one was just to write. Thanks for your time.

What is your favourite colour?

What is your favourite sport?

Who is your best friend?

What part of the world would you love to see?

What is your favourite animal?

What is your favourite food?

Are you comfortable in crowds?

Do you take a long time to get to sleep?

What is your favourite book?

What is the last film you saw?

Cats or dogs?

What is your favourite vegetable?

Write down a joke.

Summer or winter?

Who was the last person you gave a piggyback to?

What do you normally eat for breakfast?

Do you have any siblings?

Write down the name of a planet.

Have you ever been in a fight?

Have you ever been hit?

Where were you born?

What's your favourite chocolate bar?

Which World Cup is the first one you can remember watching? Where were you?

If you could paint the sky a different colour, just for one day, what colour would it be?

Have you ever told someone you loved them but didn't?

Who makes you laugh the most?

When was the most embarrassed you ever felt?

When did you feel the most sad you ever felt?

When did you feel the most happy you ever felt?

How old are you?

Have you ever had your heart broken?

Do you feel your age?

Have you ever broken a bone?

Which sport do you wish you could be really, really good at?

What's your earliest memory?

Who do you dislike the most?

What's your favourite meal?

What's your least favourite meal?

What colour are the stars?

Have you ever been in love?

When did you laugh the most you've ever laughed?

When did you last dance?

What's your favourite song?

When did you last build a sandcastle?

Does god exist?

Who was your first love?

What school did you go to?

What football team do you support, if any?

If you could change something about yourself, what would it be?

Write down another joke.

What time do you get up in the morning?

What was your favourite childhood toy?

What was the last dream you can remember?

Is the world broken?

What is your name?

What is writing?