

Writing 101

Foundations to Get You Started

1. Expand Narrative Skills

- **Sequential Storytelling:** Build a story with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Add interest by varying the way you tell a story. For instance, you can begin with the end first or tell the story from an adult or child perspective.
- **Character Depth:** Develop more complex characters by exploring their backgrounds, motivations, and conflicts. See the provided template for creating character profiles.
- **Setting and Atmosphere:** Setting in storytelling sets the tone and mood for your narrative. Instead of naming a place, use descriptive language to enhance how the setting looks and feels.

2. Use Basic Literary Techniques

- **Themes and Messages:** Many writers have themes and messages throughout their stories. Start with a message you want to convey and build your story around it.
- **Basic Symbolism:** Symbolism can be as simple as using weather (rain for sadness, sunshine for happiness) or colors to represent emotions or themes. Using symbolism can add depth to your writing that engages your audience.
- **Dialogue Basics:** When writing dialogue, we often write too much. Many people do not speak in full complete sentences. Before you begin writing dialogue, listen to how people speak in real life. How do people respond to questions? How different is the dialogue of friends or family from the dialogue of colleagues?

3. Editing Techniques

- **Self-Editing Strategies:** If you are writing, reading aloud to catch awkward phrasing is one of the best self-editing techniques I use. I notice inconsistencies and errors in tense and perspective easily when I read my work aloud. Also, do not be afraid to use spell-check and grammar tools. You do not have to agree with the suggestions; however, read it aloud to ensure the context is correct.

- **Feedback and Revisions:** You can share your work with friends or in writing groups to get feedback. Think of the revision process as re-seeing your work for an opportunity to improve and refine your writing.
- **Keeping Readers Engaged:** To keep your writing interesting for your readers, you must have a relevant story. Challenge yourself by looking at your story through different perspectives. Chose which voice or lens through which to tell it. Include a mix of action, description and dialogue in active voice while varying sentence length.

Exercise: Structuring a Narrative

- **Objective:** Practice creating a cohesive narrative with a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- **Instructions:** Write a short story of about 500 words. Start with an introduction to the setting and characters, move into a conflict or a pivotal moment, and conclude with a resolution. Focus on ensuring each part flows logically into the next.