

Assignment Instructions Powerwriting Rules

1. **Time it.** Put a watch or clock in front of you and write the time of day at the top of the page. Know in advance how long you will write, and when you will finish. At the end, write a little note about the process. Was it hard? Easy? Frustrating?
 - a. In lecture, Powerwrites will be between 5 and 10 minutes long in class. If you Powerwrite outside of class, **choose a time that feels ridiculously easy.** Five minutes is a good start. Then increase that time every few days. 5, 6, 7, 8. . . Push yourself out of your comfort zone.
2. **Write without stopping.** This means no pauses, no pencil biting, no navel gazing.
3. **Don't worry about mechanics:** spelling, grammar, punctuation, blah blah blah. Your mean English teacher will not read this. I promise. You can fix it up later. I promise.
4. **Don't go backwards.**
 - a. **No scratching out, no erasing, no correcting.** Go forward. If you aren't satisfied with your word choice, write other words. But don't go back to delete the first word. You can choose the best when you revise. I promise. In the example below, a student is writing about finding a dead body under a tree.

The tree was as tall as the mcdonalds sign and that wasn't so very tall and the leaves were bright green emerald chartreuse I don't know hwat color the color of my best friends handbag which the catalog called fern green but Ive never seen a fern like that it was the color of ferns a ferny tree a leafy tree a spirngly tree

- b. To encourage non-stop writing, **write in one long run-on sentence** –with “and” between all the sentences. You can take it all out later. I promise.

I was on my way to the store to buy bread but all they had was rye bread and I hate rye bread because it tastes like something out of a diaper and so I told the woman behind the counter don't you have white – she said that white stays in your gut for seven years. . .

5. **What comes into your head goes on to the page**
 - a. If you don't know what to write, then **write on paper, “I don't know what to write.”** If you think you suck, write **“I suck.”**
 - b. If you are writing one thing and thinking about something else, switch and **write what you're really thinking.**

The tree was tall and lovely and I just realized I'm thinking about dinner last night and how it really sucked because the sandwiches were rye and I hate rye it tastes like diapers why does mom always make it

- c. **If you think of something wild and you think, “I can't possibly write that,” then you should put it down.** Usually you're editing yourself because you're scared, and usually what we're scared of makes great writing.

6. **Learn the difference between productive and unproductive digression**
 - a. **Digression can be productive.** It's okay if you end up somewhere surprising. The trick is to figure out when your wandering mind is being creative. You will *feel* a productive digression. You will feel as if you have caught a powerful wave, or you're riding a strong horse – it is carrying you somewhere interesting and exciting and you are trying to keep up with the ideas that are coming to you fast and strong.
 - b. **Refocus when Digression is unproductive.** Sometimes, digression is just a loss of focus. You will know this because you will *feel it*. You won't feel any power. The writing will feel boring. It will seem to be taking forever. You will find yourself writing with half your mind while the other half is thinking of pizza. When this happens, *gently* bring it back to the original topic by writing questions to yourself on paper.
7. **Practice returning to your to topic by asking yourself questions on paper.**
 - a. You might write the question, "But what was I writing about?" and then write the answer to that question.
 - b. Then, ask yourself questions about the five senses by *writing them down*. "What did it smell like?"

I don't know what to write but I'm going to ask myself what did it smell like and I don't know maybe it smelled like rye bread- like diapers but that is what the bread smelled like; what did the tree smell like-- I hate rye it tastes like diapers but back to the Powerwrite what did it look like the tree wasn't tall actually it was only as tall as the mcdonald's sign when you think about it the yello M isn't really that tall but to a kid – okay, a dead body oops I was just thinking about grocery shopping but what did the body smell like a dead body what else once when I was little I found a package of hamburger still wrapped in plastic on the sidewalk and it was completely gray and I opened the wrapper it smelled like that dead body smelled. . . “

8. **Don't worry about being "good."** You are training yourself to write fluently and with focus. That is what's most important. You meet these goals whether or not you like the writing you produce.
9. **Don't worry about being FAST.** You can write slowly, but steadily. A lot of people get excited and write fast as they go, and that's fine. But as long as you aren't stopping, you're doing it right.

I don't know what to write I don't know what to write well okay what did the tree look like – the tree was tall and lovely that's a dumb description but what did it look like and it wasn't tall it was only as tall as the mcdonald's sign when you think about it the yello M isn't really that tall -- thank god macdonalds doesnt use rye bread for big macs and I told mom look I am how old and still you cant remember that I hate rye bread which tastes like baby diarrhea and she said look youre not so old I cant wash out your mouth and I just laughed because the idea of her holding me down – okay, a dead body but what did it smell like and once when I was little I found a package of hamburger still wrapped in plastic on the sidewalk and it was gray and I opened the wrapper it smelled like that dead body smelled and it was this smell that was like sticky I guess it was a smell that stuck to my skin that got inside my skin and I washed and I washed I took a shower that lasted about a day and my mom said do you know how much water costs and I said I cant get the smell out mom and she opened the curtain and said come here baby I'm just glad she didn't see me crying because the water it looked like tears