



TAKE IT From Here

10 story starters
to jump-start your
writing and 10 tips
to make it better

a writing workbook

WAYSTATION WHISTLE

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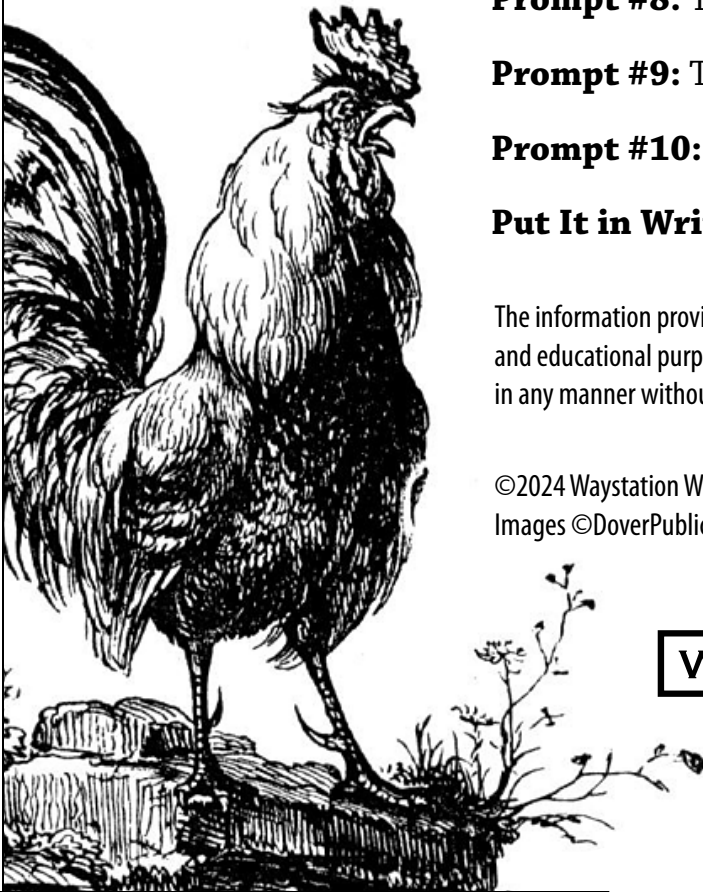
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WAYSTATION WHISTLE

WaystationWhistle.com

Where you'll find more ideas to write,
share, and document your stories.



Introduction



What story do you want to tell?

It can be hard to know where to start. You can spend days, weeks, or even months wondering which story to tell. Of course, it doesn't really matter which story you start with—what matters is you start.

The writing prompts in this workbook will help you get started—and give you somewhere to go.

One sentence at a time.

It's also a refresher on some of the things that make good writing good. Things like trimming excess words, writing in a conversational tone, eliminating jargon, and being mindful of all those exclamation points(!).

Write well, and people will want to read what you write. If not, you'll lose them before the last sentence of the first paragraph.

My earliest writing was in letters to family and friends—a receptive and telling audience. The more I wrote, the more I noticed that some letters got more attention than others.

Letters with opening lines like: **“The neighbor's chickens are squawking.”** And, **“It's so cold even the dog wore a coat,”** were the letters people talked about.

Their feedback changed how I wrote.

Instead of starting with “Just-a-note-to-say,” I started my letters with a statement—a one sentence introduction followed by a story I wanted to share. Challenging myself to craft a one sentence introduction made my letters more interesting to the people I wrote to—and more interesting to write.

The 10 writing prompts in this workbook are designed to jump-start your writing practice. The illustrations are just that, illustrations. They are not meant to influence your writing—unless you have a story that relates to one of them and you want to write that story. Rather, write about what comes to mind when you read the prompt.

The challenge is for you to use the prompt as the first line in your writing.

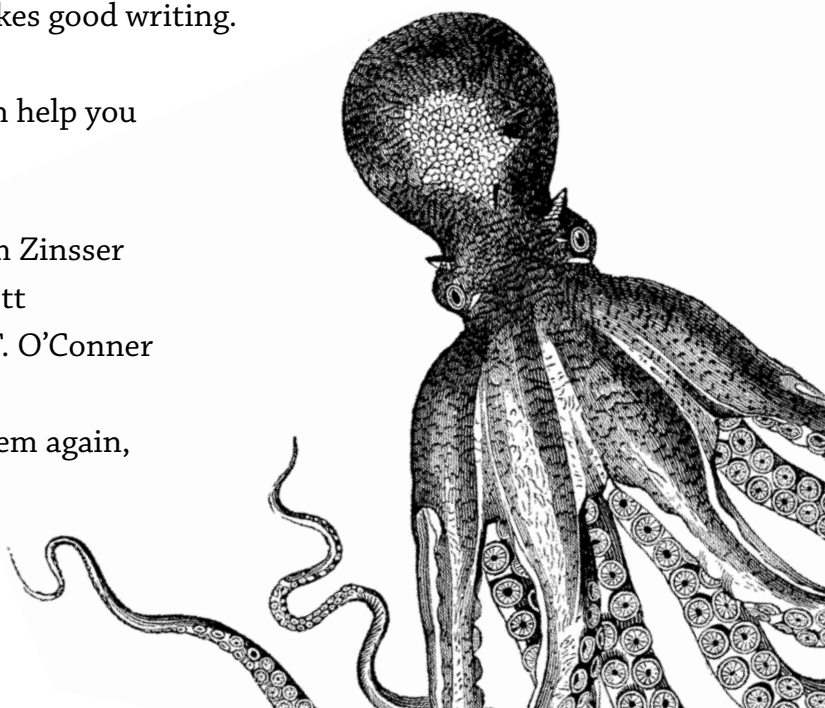
You’ll also find 10 writing tips—a reminder to study and revisit what makes good writing.

Here are three books that can help you improve your writing.

- ***On Writing Well*** by William Zinsser
- ***Bird by Bird*** by Anne Lamott
- ***Words Fail Me*** by Patricia T. O’Conner

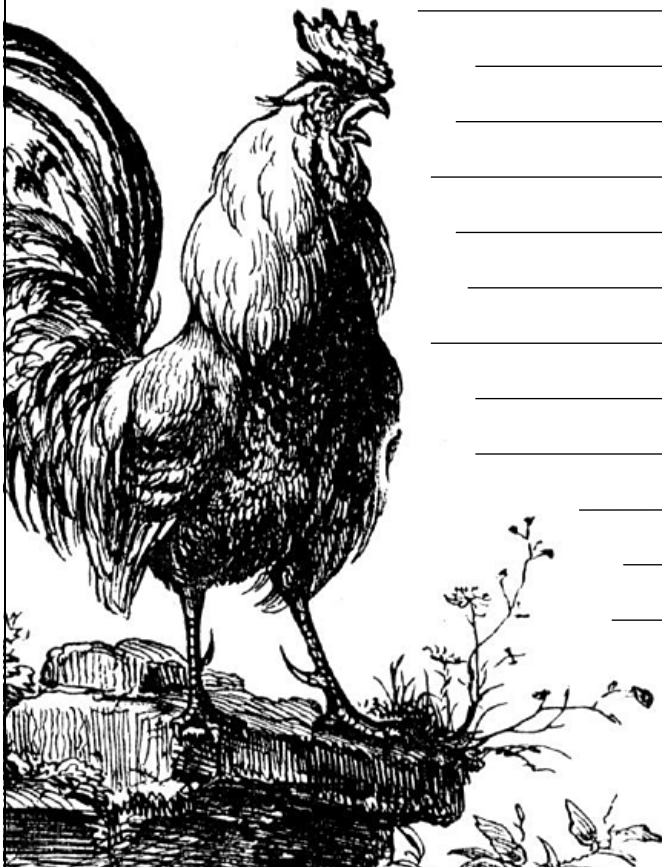
Read them once, and read them again, especially if it’s been a while.

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Prompt #1:

It was early in the morning.

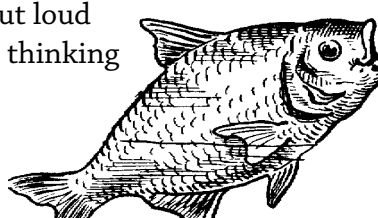
This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

The only way to get started is to write.
If it helps, warm up with a list of words
relative to the story you're telling. And try
not to edit yourself until you've
got something to edit.

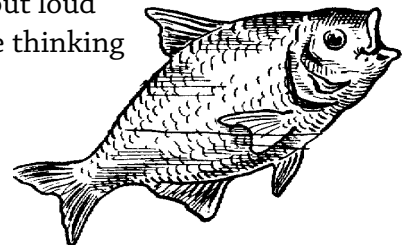
Prompt #2:

I thought it would be easy.

Write in a conversational tone.
Imagine you're sitting across
the table from someone. If it
helps, say out loud
what you're thinking
and write
it down.

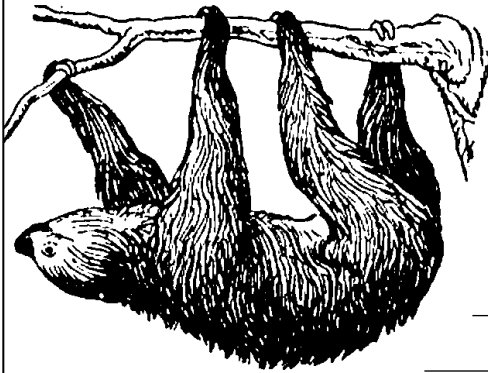
A cartoon illustration of a smiling fish with a fishing hook in its mouth. The fish is facing right and has a happy expression. The hook is attached to a line that goes off to the right.

Write in a conversational tone. Imagine you're sitting across the table from someone. If it helps, say out loud what you're thinking and write it down.



Prompt #3:

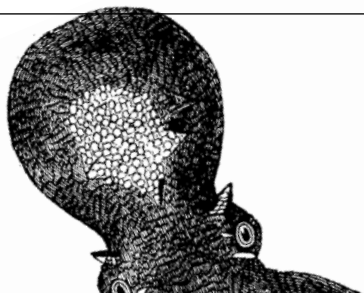
It took longer than expected.



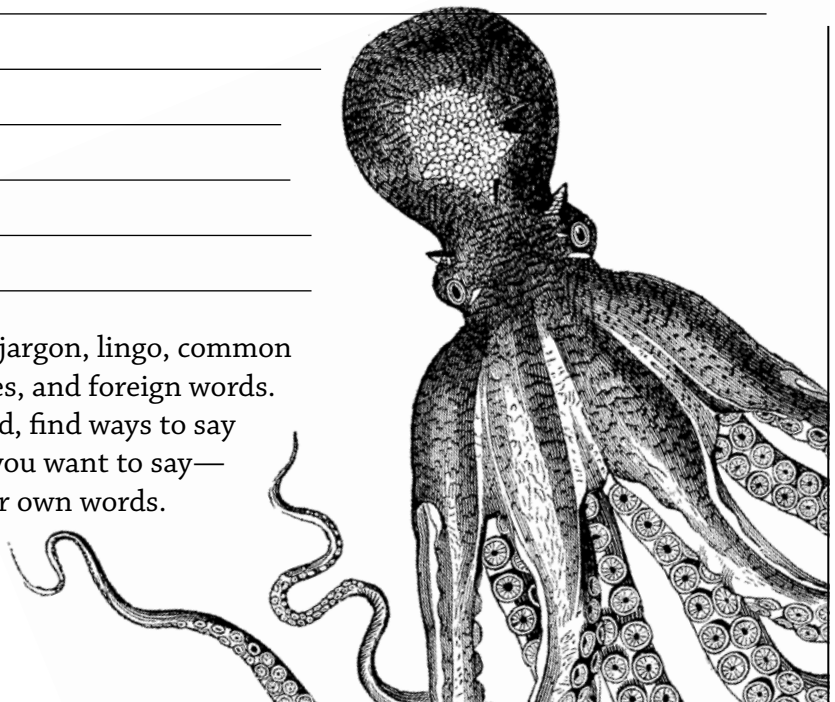
Limit your use of exclamation points.
There's no need to inform your
readers they should be surprised or
shocked by what they're reading. Your
writing should lead them there.

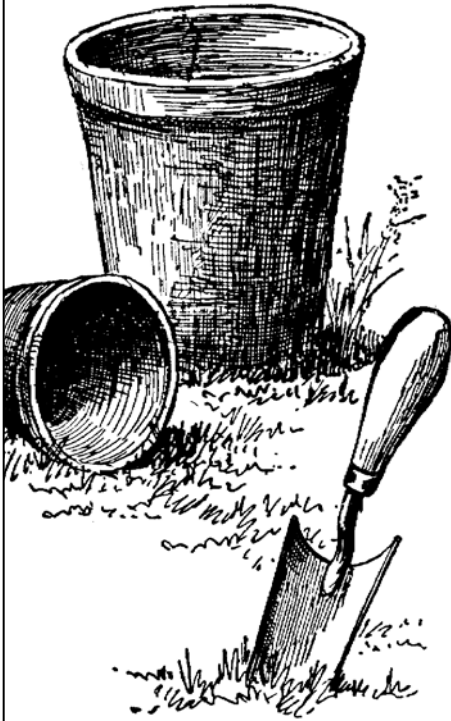
Prompt #4:

It was my first job.



Avoid jargon, lingo, common phrases, and foreign words. Instead, find ways to say what you want to say—in your own words.





Prompt #5:

The weather wasn't cooperating.

[illegible][illegible]

If you're writing online articles and blog posts, keep paragraphs to two or three sentences. It gives your readers breathing room, and visually, it's more inviting.

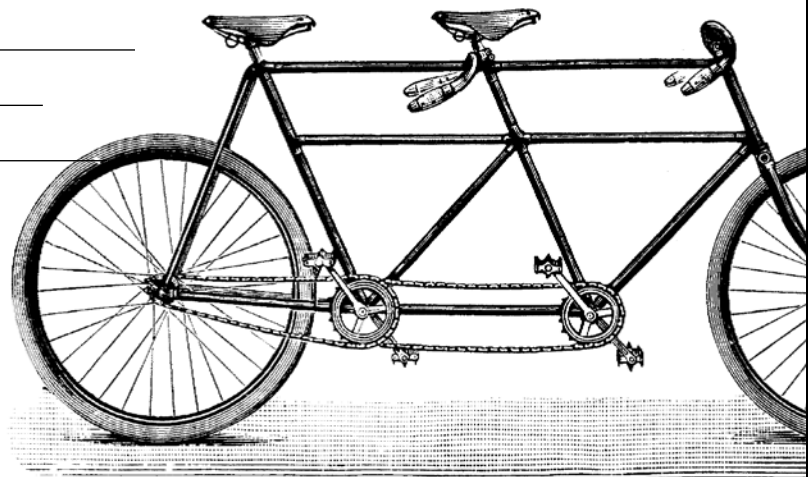
Prompt #6:

We weren't sure which way to go.

Get rid of unnecessary words. There's no need to write, "It was very hot." Hot is hot.



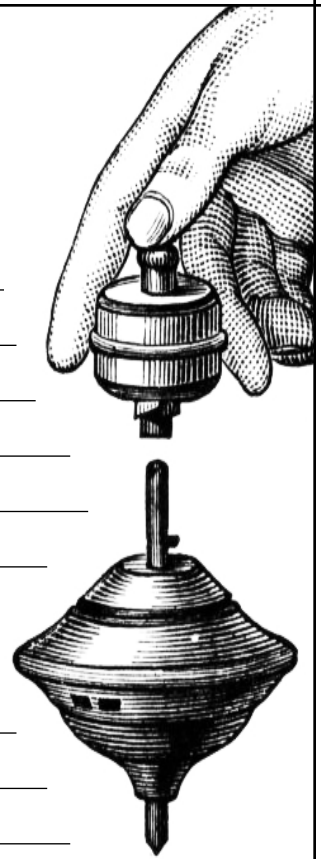
Get rid of unnecessary words. There's no need to write, "It was very hot." Hot is hot.



Prompt #7:

It started as a hobby.

Read your
loud. As y
stumble o
fix, awkwa
and ser
are



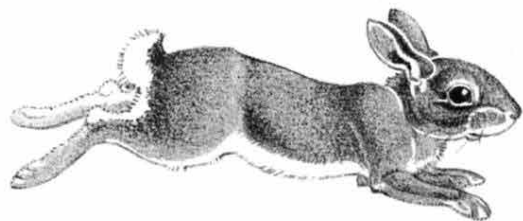
Read your writing out loud. As you do, you'll stumble over, and can fix, awkward passages and sentences that aren't working.

Prompt #8:

There was no turning back.

Use details in your writing. Instead of, “It was a long ride,” write about what made it a long ride: “It was four hours of highway driving followed by an hour of bumper to bumper traffic, lane changes, and brake lights.”

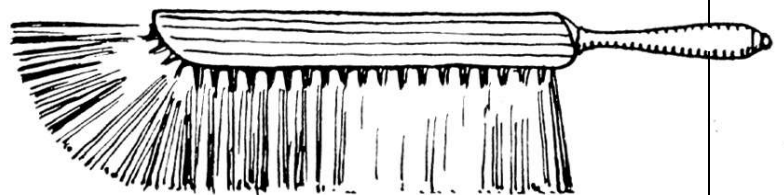
Use details in your writing. Instead of, “It was a long ride,” write about what made it a long ride: “It was four hours of highway driving followed by an hour of bumper to bumper traffic, lane changes, and brake lights.”



The competition was tough.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Vary the length of your sentences. Following a long sentence with a short one gives your readers a welcome pause. And the emphasis you want.



Put your stories in writing

Writing is one of the best ways to organize your thoughts and make sense of what you know. You can share your writing in letters, books, blog posts, journals, and articles. Or not at all.

Write for yourself.

Not a tell-all diary, but a record of your experience and what you've learned along the way.

People love stories—and you've got some good ones.

Use the prompts in this book to get started and visit WaystationWhistle.com for more tips and inspiration.

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Where you'll find more ideas to write,
share, and document your stories.