

Starting a Writing Project

Writing in the name of brain health

Autobiographies, children's stories, articles for a local newspaper, photo albums, and recipe books are just some of the many forms a writing project can take. Writing activates several areas of the brain. Time to express your creativity!

Concentration and motor skills

Writing involves concentrating, thinking, using your imagination, and exercising your memory—all of which activates multiple regions of the brain. When you put pen to paper or type on a keyboard, you're also skillfully coordinating the movements of your fingers, which activates the motor cortex.

Creating a text requires style and at least a little research. Looking up words in the dictionary, checking grammar rules, finding an evocative synonym, searching for an inspiring subject on the internet or in reference books . . . Writing gets your creative juices flowing in so many ways!

Moreover, when you use your brain, you fortify your neurons, the nerve cells responsible for transmitting information. A strong network of neurons is thought to compensate for the damage caused by Alzheimer's disease, helping to preserve memory and other cognitive functions.



A project you hold dear

What are your interests? Is there a subject you're passionate about? Choose a topic you like or a project that's dear to your heart. For example, you could share your most unforgettable or amusing memories, pen the story of your aunt's travels around the world, or lay your heart bare in a series of personal poems.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS:

- An annotated photo album
- A book of your best recipes (and tasty family secrets!)
- Your autobiography or the biography of someone important to you
- A scrapbook of travel memories
- An article or opinion piece for the neighbourhood newspaper
- An online blog
- Children's stories
- Poems, short stories, songs, prose

Take the time to make a list of **projects that excite you**. Talk it over with your loved ones. You might find new inspiration, or even a partner for your project! Finally, dive in and get started, even if you end up changing your mind along the way.

Project pointers

- Choose a **quiet place** where you'll be able to concentrate.
- Establish a **work plan and timeline**, especially if you're planning a large-scale project.
- Create a research file to keep interesting information organized as you go.

Practical advice

- If you don't write often or haven't written anything in a while, start with **30-minute writing sessions**.
- **Pencil these sessions into your calendar**. Choose a time of day when your brain is particularly alert. Give yourself some leeway in case inspiration strikes at minute 31!
- **Easily distracted?** Resist the temptation to start another load of laundry and stay in your workspace! Remain focused on your project for the entirety of your session.
- **Lacking inspiration?** Struggling with writer's block?
 - Go over your research one more time. Take some notes. Watch a video related to your topic.
 - Take inspiration from existing research (don't reinvent the wheel!).
 - **Ask for advice from someone who has completed a similar project.**
 - Get some fresh air! **Your brain needs a break** from time to time, just as your body does when you exercise.
 - Remember that inspiration sometimes comes as you write.
- **Combine working on your project with physical activity**. For example, bike or walk to a café or library. Your brain will thank you!



Further reading

NOTE: Links to other websites are not updated continuously. If you come across a broken link, use search engines to find the information you're looking for.

RESOURCES

- Writing project suggestions:
 - Create a photo album
 - Create a recipe book
 - Write your autobiography
 - Draw your family tree
- A website that automatically generates ideas for writing projects: www.plot-generator.org.uk/