Explanation Writing type test and writing stations

This is material that you can use for individualized facilitation of writing processes. We use it preferably during writing events, e.g. during our “Long Night Against Procrastination” or “Writing Marathon”.

How to use the material?

1. **Writers might want to start with taking the “Writing Type Test”:** Fill out the test and count the results. Afterwards, have a look at the explanations for the writers’ types.

   Background information: This test was developed by colleagues of the “Arbeitskreis Schreibdidaktik Berlin-Brandenburg” (Working Group Writing Pedagogies in Berlin and Brandenburg). It is inspired by research of the Austrian Linguist Hanspeter Ortner (2000), who analyzed the writing strategies of published authors, mainly in creative writing. He concluded that writing processes are much more different and individualized than writing process models suggest. He identified ten different general “types” of writers.

   For the test, we reduced those ten types to four, to make working with it easier. We did this after discussing experiences from our writing courses in depth, but without conducting structured research. The aim of the test is therefore not to identify writers’ types in a strictly scientific way, but to make writers think about their writing processes and how they approach them.

2. **Having read the explanation, writers can think about whether they agree with the description of their writing processes or not.**

3. **Writers find four stations for writers in the room and choose where they would like to work.** Each station is dedicated to one writers’ type. They contain writing prompts that follow the strategies of the different writers’ types. Writers choose which strategies they would like to follow and choose the station. Writers could either decide that they would like to test that they really work according to the test results and choose the station that works according to their test results. Or they could decide that they want to expand their repertoire of writing strategies and therefore choose a completely different station than their results suggest.

   **Hint for writing teachers and tutors:** Research underlines how important it is to create a repertoire of flexible writing strategies. It is important for writers to know that there are very different ways to get to a good text at the end of a writing process. Facilitating ways to test different approaches is therefore helpful, even if writers might not like every strategy they try.
Preparing Writing Stations

- Print and copy writer’s type test (as many times as you have partipicants)
- Print every writer type and copy 5 times on coloured paper (a different color for each type).
- Print material you need for the writer type stations (cf. handouts)
- Have round and square index cards (for gold digger)
- Have scissors and glues sticks and envelopes
- Prepare the room with a nice set-up on different tables
What Kind of Writer are You?

Read each question about how you typically write and circle the letter of the most appropriate answer.

(1) When getting started on a writing assignment or project, I . . .

- let the topic develop in my head. (c)
- brainstorm and write down anything that is possibly related to the topic. (a)
- read, research, or collect anything remotely related to my topic. (b)
- write multiple introductions and decide later which one to use. (d)

(2) While writing, I . . .

- use outlines to develop my ideas. (c)
- draft without worrying about structure or organization. (a)
- write about whatever I find most interesting or inspirational. (b)
- write parts or sections (e.g., introduction) multiple times. (d)

(3) While writing, I . . .

- work through several drafts or attempts to get to the core of what I want to say. (d)
- prefer to draft or revise multiple sections at once. (b)
- often find myself surprised at the ideas I develop during the process. (a)
- tend to follow my outline. (c)

(4) When my writing assignment or project is nearing completion, I . . .

- need time to make organizational changes. (a)
- need to make only minor corrections. (c)
- need to review previously saved versions and select the best one. (d)
- need to revise for unnecessary repetition and ensure that I have a clear conclusion (b)

Total and record in the boxes below the number of times you choose a, b, c or d.

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Developed with material from: Ulrike Scheuermann: „Die Schreibfitness-Mappe: 60 Checklisten, Beispiele und Übungen für alle, die beruflich schreiben“. Wien: Linde
Four Common Writer Types:
Adventurer, Squirrel, Gold Digger, Decathlete

(a) The Adventurer: “The Journey is the Destination”

You like jumpstarting into writing. You know how to start and you develop ideas and often even structures while writing. Famous adventurers include André Breton, Martin Walser, and Siegfried Lenz.*

Benefits of this process:
+ You write freely and unencumbered and it is rarely boring.
+ You are open to new ideas and you find them when you write quite often.
+ You can quickly see that you have accomplished something.

Potential Risks:
- You might deviate from the central issue.
- You must allow more time for revision.
- You do not see the end.

(b) The Squirrel: "Collecting and Jumping"

You do not write in a linear way from A to B, but jump around from one part of the draft to another. You tend to interrupt writing to research additional information. Famous Squirrels are Eichhörnchen sind zum Beispiel Ingeborg Bachmann, Günther Grass, and Thomas Mann.*

Benefits of this process:
+ You are flexible and can work on a different part of the text when you get stuck.
+ You take many small steps, which reduces anxiety for writing longer texts.
+ The provisional nature of your procedure prevents unhealthy perfectionism.

Potential risks:
- You might postpone difficult parts of your text endlessly.
- You can easy lose track.
- You do not see the end.
(c) The Gold Digger: "Planning and Digging Deep"

You prefer to make a plan before you start writing and follow this plan as you write. In other words, you dig deep with a treasure map in hand in search of the perfect text.

Famous Gold Diggers are Peter Handke and Hermann Hesse (planning without taking notes) or Henning Mankell and Carl Zuckmayer (complex written outlines)

Benefits of this process:
+ Your approach is straightforward and allows you to plan your time efficiently.
+ You can always find the thread of your text.
+ You can explain your plans to others and therefore write in teams as well.

Potential risks:
- You are not open to new ideas.
- You can lose yourself in the planning and start too late to write.
- It takes a long time before you see tangible results in the form of text because of time spent on planning.

(d) The Decathlete: "Several Starts Before Getting to the Point"

You write your text in several versions. You often throw paper away or open a new file, start several times or (re)write parts of the text.

Famous decathletes are Friedrich Dürrenmatt (entire books written in several versions) and Heinrich Boell (chunks of text written several times).

Benefits of this process:
+ You can write without struggling with perfection if you embrace your approach.
+ You utilize writing for thinking.
+ Your final texts are very focused and straightforward.

Potential risks:
- You have to get loose of much text that won’t appear in the final version.
- Your approach seems to be time consuming.
- You could lose overview if too many versions arise.

Adventurer

At this station you write adventurously and spontaneously. You need: Handout ABCdarium, Handout Freewriting, Scissors, an envelope.

Decide on which writing project you would like to work on during the next 30 minutes. It should be a real project, e.g. a chapter of your thesis or the introduction of your next research article. Please write the topic down.

1. The first step is to write an “ABCdarium”. Use the prepared handout that you find at this station. In no longer than five minutes try to find as many words as possible that somehow are associated with your topic and that start with the different letters of the alphabet. Don’t exceed the time; you do not have to find a word for every single letter.

2. Cut the words out and put the clips in an envelope.

3. Now write a focused freewriting on your topic (cf. handout “Freewriting”). Start with the following sentence: „My text is about...“. Have a watch/mobile phone at hand!

4. Every three minutes you take a clip with another word out of the envelope. Spontaneously, you have to build in this word into your text.

5. After finishing, re-read your text and mark passages and ideas you like. You can later use this draft for your writing project and think about it in a more serious way. So far, just enjoy thinking wildly and being adventurous.
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The most effective way I know to improve your writing is to do freewriting exercises regularly. At least three times a week. They are sometimes called "automatic writing," "babbling," or "jabbering" exercises. The idea is simply to write for ten minutes (later on, perhaps fifteen or twenty). Don't stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing. If you can't think of a word or a spelling, just use a squiggle or else write "I can't think what to say, I can't think what to say" as many times as you want; or repeat the last word you wrote over and over again; or anything else. The only requirement is that you never stop.

What happens to a freewriting exercise is important. It must be a piece of writing which, even if someone else reads it, doesn't send any ripples back to you. It is like writing something and putting it in a bottle in the sea. Freewritings help you by providing no feedback at all. When I assign one, I invite the writer to let me read it, but also tell him to keep it if he prefers.

Here is an example of a fairly coherent exercise (sometimes they are very incoherent, which is fine):
I think I'll write what's on my mind, but the only thing on my mind right now is what to write for ten minutes. I've never done this before and I'm not prepared in any way--the sky is cloudy today, how's that? now I'm afraid I won't be able to think of what to write when I get to the end of the sentence--well, here I am at the end of the sentence--here I am again, again, again, at least I'm still writing--now I ask is there some reason to be happy that I'm still writing--ah yes! Here comes the question again--What am I getting out of this? What point is there in it? It's just too obscene to always ask it but I seem to question everything that way and I was gonna say something else pertaining to that but I got so busy writing down the first part that I forgot what I was leading into. This is kind of fun oh don't stop writing--cars and trucks speeding by somewhere out the window, pens clattering across peoples' papers. The sky is still cloudy--is it symbolic that I should be mentioning it? Huh? I dunno. Maybe I should try colors, blue, red, dirty words--wait a minute--no can't do that, orange, yellow, arm tired, green pink violet magenta lavender red brown black green--now I can't think of any more colors--just about done--relief? maybe.

Freewriting may seem crazy but actually it makes simple sense. Think of the difference between speaking and writing. Writing has the advantage of permitting more editing. But that's its downfall too. Almost everyone interposes a massive and complicated series of editings between the time the words start to be born into consciousness and when they finally come of the end of the pencil or typewriter onto the page. This is partly because schooling makes us obsessed with the "mistakes" we make in writing. Many people constantly think about spelling and grammar as they try to write. I am always thinking about the awkwardness, wordiness, and general mushiness of my natural verbal product as I try to write down words.

But it's not just "mistakes" or "bad writing" we edit as we write. We also edit unacceptable thoughts and feelings, as we do in speaking. In writing there is more time to do it so the editing is heavier: when speaking, there's someone right there waiting for a reply and he'll get bored or think we're crazy if we don't come out with something. Most of the time in speaking, we settle for the catch-as-catch-can way in which the words tumble out. In writing, however, there's a chance to try to get them right. But the opportunity to get them right is a terrible burden: you can work for two hours trying to get a paragraph "right" and discover it's not right at all. And then give up.

Editing, in itself, is not the problem. Editing is usually necessary if we want to end up with something satisfactory. The problem is that editing goes on at the same time as producing. . . .

The main thing about freewriting is that it is nonediting. It is an exercise in bringing together the process of producing words and putting them down on the page. Practiced regularly, it undoes the ingrained habit of editing at the same time you are trying to produce. It will make writing less blocked because words will come more easily. . . .

Next time you write, notice how often you stop yourself from writing down something you were going to write down. Or else cross it out after it's been written. "Naturally," you say, 'it wasn't any good.' But think for a moment about the occasions when you spoke well. Seldom was it because you first got the beginning right. Usually it was a matter of a halting or even a garbled beginning, but you kept going and your speech finally became coherent and even powerful. There is a lesson here for writing: trying to get the beginning just right is a formula for failure--and probably a secret tactic to make yourself give up writing. Make some words, whatever they are, and then grab hold of that line and reel in as hard as you can. Afterwards you can throw away lousy beginnings and make new ones. This is the quickest way to get into good writing.

The habit of compulsive, premature editing doesn't just make writing hard. It also makes writing dead. Your voice is damped out by all the interruptions, changes, and hesitations between the consciousness and the page. In your natural way of producing words there is a sound, a texture, a rhythm--a voice--which is the main source of power in your writing. I don't know how it works, but this voice is the force that will make a reader listen to you. Maybe you don't like your voice; maybe people have made fun of it. But it's the only voice you've got. It's your only source of power. You better get back into it, no matter what you think of it. If you keep writing in it, it may change into something you like better. But if you abandon it, you'll likely never have a voice and never be heard.

The Decathlete

At this station you act like a decathlete: "Several Starts Before Getting to the Point". Peter Elbow, who promotes this writing technique, explains: “This method means more words written and thrown away. Perhaps even more work. But less banging your head against a stone wall – pushing with all your might against something that won’t budge. So though you are tired, you are less frustrated. The process tends to create a transaction that helps you expend more of your energy more productively.” (Elbow 1973, 1998, S. 22)

You need: Pen and paper or your computer, a watch or mobile phone to stop the time.

Decide on which writing project you would like to work during the next 30 minutes. It should be a real project, e.g. a chapter of your thesis or the introduction of your next research article. Please write the topic down.

1. Write down a first draft of your text. Write quickly and without thinking too much about quality or correctness. Write for seven Minutes.
2. Now read your text and think about it: What have I written here? What did I find out? What do I like about it? Summarize your thoughts in a few sentences and write them down. (3 min.)
3. Now, take a new blank page or open a new file. Put your first version away, don’t look at it any longer. Now write a second version of your text. Again: Write quickly and without thinking too much about quality or correctness (7 min.).
4. Now read your second text and think about it: What have I written here? What did I find out? What do I like about it? Summarize your thoughts in a few sentences and write them down. (3 min.)
5. Again, take a new blank page or open a new file. Put your second version also away, don’t look at it any longer. Now write a third version of your text. Again: Write quickly and without thinking too much about quality or correctness (7 min.).
6. Now read your third text and think about it: What have I written here? What did I find out? What do I like about it? Summarize your thoughts in a few sentences and write them down. (3 min.)
7. Finally, compare all versions. Which one do you like best? Would you like to recycle some parts of former versions and integrate them into the third one? Or would you like to fit them all together into a fourth one? Continue however you like!
Gold digger

Digging into the depth with a plan in your hand. At this station you will plan your writing in advance. You need: pens and paper, handout Freewriting, round and square index cards.

Decide which writing project you would like to work on during the next 30 minutes. It should be a real project, e.g. a chapter of your thesis or the introduction of your next research article. Please write the topic down.

1. Write a freewriting focusing on the text you want to write. E.g., if you already have ideas, you could start to draft your introduction. Or you can just note ideas (3 min).
2. Now, underline all terms in your text that seem to be important (2 min).
3. Take a short break and relax. In this time, try to imagine a picture of your text. What does the text look like? Can you see the structure? (1 min)
4. Now try to sketch the picture on paper. How many paragraphs will the text have? How long will they probably be? Just scribble something down, you don’t need to use words, you might use forms or lines.
5. Now take the index cards. For this step you have to distinguish between the content and the function of your paragraphs. Please write down one sentence for each paragraph you plan to write which summarizes the content, e.g., “Writing intensive classes enhance learning”. Write the content sentences on square index cards, one card for each paragraph. Accordingly, you write down one sentence for each paragraph that indicates the function, e.g. “thesis statement” oder “gives an example” or “provides background”. Write the function on round index cards, one card for each paragraph.
6. Take all your index cards and try to group them into the structure you had tried to imagine and to sketch. You do not have to stick to your picture, you are also allowed to play and see how you can group and structure the index cards to plan the future structure of your text. However, make sure that you have a content summary and a function for each part. They should always be in pairs with a round and a square card along your text path!
7. Finally, write down the plan in your notebook or computer. Now you can start to work on your draft.
The squirrel jumps back and forth while writing and meanwhile it collects more and more material. Therefore, at this station you produce a draft composed from different single texts and material. You need: The prepared envelope with writing prompts, large sheets, scissors, glue stick, different pens for drawing and writing.

Decide on which writing project you would like to work on during the next 30 minutes. It should be a real project, e.g. a chapter of your thesis or the introduction of your next research article. Please write the topic down.

1. Take a writing prompt out of the prepared envelope. Take five minutes to write, following the prompt.
2. After five minutes, you take the next prompt and write on. You continue like this, starting every five minutes new, for four to five times. Try to take prompts in different colours. Important: use your paper on only oneside, you have to cut it later.
3. After approximately 20 minutes take some large sheets, scissors and glue stick. Lay all your different drafts in front of you. Now, cut out whatever seems to be important. Afterwards, try to glue these parts in a logical structure on a sheet. Leave empty spaces in between if you like and fill them with connecting words or phrases.

Did you enjoy hopping back and forth?
In this text/chapter I am going to use the following source: “…
“Summarize the content of this source and explain why it is important for your text or chapter

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Comment [KG1]: Print each sheet in a different colour several times and cut in pieces, put in envelope
How would your chapter or text look like if it was a map? What might be the main attractions on this map? Which viewpoints are there? What are the main roads, small roads, pathways? Describe the map in a continuous text. If you like, draw the map in advance.

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In this text/chapter, the term “....” is very important. Write a definition of a main term and explain in a few sentences, why the term is important for your text.

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In this text/chapter, the term “....” is very important. Write a definition of a main term and explain in a few sentences, why the term is important for your text.
In this text, I am discussing..., because I want to find out about who/what/when/where/whether/how...in order to help my readers understand how/why/whether....

In this text, I am discussing..., because I want to find out about who/what/when/where/whether/how...in order to help my readers understand how/why/whether....

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Write a summary in five sentences.

Write a summary in five sentences.

Write a summary in five sentences.

Write a summary in five sentences.

Write a summary in five sentences.