

10 Tips to Jumpstart Your Creativity

by Beth Barany, Book Coach and Creative Consultant for Writers

Writing is much like exercise: the more we write the stronger, the better writer, we become. And like exercise we need cross-train—strengthen different muscle groups—to have overall fitness.

This article is about training your *creativity muscle*.

These tips can get your juices flowing, pique your interest, help you come up with new ideas, or get unstuck, and can be used at every stage of the creating process from concept generation, the actual writing and revising, and publication.

#1 -Travel. Take a trip, anywhere out of the ordinary. Nothing opens the eye and the heart to the wonders of this world and all the stories laying in wait than stepping out of the ordinary path of your life. (This article was written in the tiny Urbana/Champaign, Illinois airport on the way back to the West Coast.) The trip doesn't have to be far or costly. Julia Cameron, author of *The Artist's Way*, calls this the "weekly date with yourself". Simply go to a grocery store you never go to, to a new part of town, or to a place within 30 miles you've never visited that always seemed boring and/or mysterious. Visit a local museum or art gallery (free art viewing!) Of course, an expensive overseas or cross-country trip does wonders to the soul, too. Travel to a new place weekly, or whenever you need a boost for your senses.

#2—First lines. Open a random book and use the first line you see to start a free write or read for the pure enjoyment of it.

#3—Speak. Have a conversation with someone you see occasionally but have never spoken to.

#4—Eat. Go to a new restaurant. Eat a food that you've never tried.

#5—Explore with the mind. Read a book outside your of the kind you normally read.

#6—Write differently. Write a 20-30 min piece in a different style than you're used. If you always write memos, write fiction. If you always write short emails, write flowery personal notes.

#7—Dream. Write 20-30 minutes about your ideal working or playing environment. Choose one thing from this free write and incorporate that into your actual space.

#8—Brainstorm. Use the Brainstorm cards that accompany the book, *The Writer's Brainstorming Kit: Thinking in New Directions* by Pam McCutcheon and Michael Waite, to brainstorm new ways of thinking about your problem, project or challenge. Exercise your lateral thinking!

#9—Free write regularly/daily for 20-30 minutes (don't stop there if you don't want to. I generally free write for an hour). This exercise allows a bond to develop between your unconscious and your conscious mind and the act of the flow. Let yourself write whatever comes to mind - i.e., your daily life, musings, ramblings, dream fragments. Here you are giving yourself permission to write poorly without thought to word choice, spelling or grammar. You do have a goal however, and that is to get to your work-in-progress (WIP), your current project. Let your mind wander gently to the current niggling problem you're facing with your WIP. Free writing provides a good place and time to mull over possibilities.

#10—Adventure. Do an **activity** that you've always wanted to do that you may have been putting off for a more opportune time. Now's the time! Go take a class in racing, proper firearm use, archery, pottery, painting, weaving, etc. The key here is to engage all your senses and for the activity you choose to be very different from sitting, writing and reading.

Mix and match these tips in any order. Observe what works for you and incorporate that into your **Regular Brainstorming and Creativity Workouts**. Most importantly, have fun. The **Fun Factor** is an all-important element to **Jumpstarting Your Creativity**.