

# Writing and Tutorial Center

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## Creative Writing: Finding Your Own Voice

By nature, creative writing assignments are often fairly open-ended, so it can sometimes be difficult to focus on a single idea. To make sure that you stay within the bounds of an assignment, highlight key requirements or write them down on a Post-It note. Stuck getting started? Think about your interests or influences, in any medium; try just freewriting without any expectations, see where it takes you.

### WRITING FICTION

The main question to keep in mind when writing a piece of fiction is: Does it do what it sets out to do? In other words, what is the intention, and does it fulfill that for the reader? With other types of academic writing you might consider whether it answers the prompt/assignment or follows the rules or structure of a particular type of essay. For creative writing (unless there is a very specific prompt), it's more important to ask whether it follows its own rules.

Correct grammar usage and proper sentence structure is less important here than in other kinds of writing. While it's not unimportant, remember that unusual sentence structures or grammar, slang, sentence fragments or run-on sentences (for example, in a stream-of-consciousness narration), and other non-academic constructions could appear very deliberately in creative writing. This comes back to knowing what is intentional and what isn't—you should write in such a way that its clear you're doing this on purpose and for a reason.

It can be helpful to ask: Where do I want this to end up? Where should the reader be at the end of the piece? What is the emotional journey I want the reader to experience? Are there certain revelations which punctuate the piece and if so, are they positioned well? What are a character's motivations? What are their internal and external conflicts? How are all of these things related (or not)?

### WRITING POETRY

Original poetry can be a little tricky as the "rules" can either be much stricter or maybe even nonexistent! Think about your own beliefs and stances. What are your aesthetic values? Do you prefer poems to be more objective or confessional? Are you interested in experimentation, or fitting within fixed structure, or something in the middle? Pinning these things down helps establish a clearer set of standards by which to assess if your writing is achieving what it sets to do.

Sensory experience is key for many poets: vocabulary choice in terms of sound, how the words feel in your mouth, or what kinds of images or feelings they evoke. As with writing prose, ask yourself what am I attempting to do and am I communicating the emotions that I intend to convey?

Self-critique is also an important part of writing poetry, as the person best situated to gauge its success is oftentimes yourself. What parts of the poem please you the most? What parts do you feel don't work so well? You might want to focus on sections of the poem that seem to be full of energy and novelty, and contrast that with parts of the poem that seem to be more habitual, indolent, or less developed. Are there things you can do to push any uninteresting bits a little more? Once you're able to constructively identify parts of your writing that are *really* working, things will start to get notably easier.

One of the very best ways to improve your own writing is by reading other poets, especially those who work in similar modes to you. Ask your professor for suggestions of poets to investigate. But if you still aren't sure, The Poetry Foundation is a great starting point: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>