

Writing 101: Build a Blogging Habit

WRITING 101: BUILD A BLOGGING HABIT

Stretch your writing muscles

The Editors, WordPress.com



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INTRODUCTION: CREATE A WRITING HABIT

Looking for some writing inspiration — something to encourage you to create and nurture a writing habit? Look no further than *Writing 101, Build a Blogging Habit*.

In this book, you'll find 20 days of writing inspiration. Each day offers a new prompt and a special twist. While we do recommend working through the book in order — you're free to pick and choose the prompts that inspire you.

Have fun and write well.

— The Editors, WordPress.com

1

UNLOCK THE MIND

You write because you have an idea in your mind that feels so genuine, so important, so true. And yet, by the time this idea passes through the different filters of your mind, and into your hand, and onto the page or computer screen — it becomes distorted, and it's been diminished. The writing you end up with is an approximation, if you're lucky, of whatever it was you really wanted to say.

– Author Khaled Hosseini, “[How to Write](#),” the Atlantic.

At *The Daily Post*, we try to instill a daily blogging habit in each of our readers. We've gotten to know many of you — your avatars, your blogs — and are

reminded each day that our community is full of many different stories and voices.

Some of you want to take your craft of writing to the next level — you might be a seasoned [daily prompter](#) ready for something more, or want to experiment with different aspects of storytelling, from considering your setting and point of view, to developing your characters and dialogue.

So, welcome to *Writing 101: Build a Blogging Habit*. In these twenty days, we'll dive into the elements of storytelling, help you cut through writer's block and — as [Natalie Goldberg](#) teaches — access the pure thoughts and ideas of your wild mind.

To get started, let's loosen up. Let's unlock the mind. Today, take twenty minutes to free write. And don't think about what you'll write. Just write.

Keep typing (or scribbling, if you prefer to hand-write for this exercise) until your twenty minutes are up. It doesn't matter if what you write is incomplete, or nonsense, or not worthy of the "Publish" button.

And for your first twist? Publish this stream-of-consciousness post on your blog.

2

A ROOM WITH A VIEW (OR JUST A VIEW)

If you could zoom through space in the speed of light, what place would you go to right now?

The spaces we inhabit have an influence on our mood, our behavior, and even the way we move and interact with others. Enter a busy train station, and you immediately quicken your step. Step into a majestic cathedral, and you lower your voice and automatically look up. Return to your own room, and your body relaxes.

A place belongs forever to whoever claims it

hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically that he remakes it in his own image.

– Joan Didion

Today, choose a place to which you'd like to be transported if you could — and tell us the back-story. How does this specific location affect you? Is it somewhere you've been, luring you with the power of nostalgia, or a place you're aching to explore for the first time?

Today's twist: organize your post around the description of a setting.

Giving your readers a clear sense of the space where your story unfolds will help them plunge deeper into your writing. Whether it's a room, a house, a town, or something entirely different (a cave? a spaceship?), provide concrete details to set this place apart — and to create a more immersive reading experience.

You can go the hyperrealist route (think the opening four paragraphs of [Gustave Flaubert's *A Simple Soul*](#), a masterclass of telling detail). Or focus on how a specific space makes the people in it feel and behave, like blogger Julie Riso did in this [visceral recounting of her hike through an Estonian bog](#).

3

COMMIT TO A WRITING PRACTICE

Write about the three most important songs in your life — what do they mean to you?

Nailing Brahms' *Hungarian Dance Number 5* on your alto sax. Making perfect pulled pork tacos. Drawing what you see. Or, writing a novel. Each requires that you make practice a habit.

Today, try free writing. To begin, empty your mind onto the page. Don't censor yourself; don't think. Just let go. Let the emotions or memories connected to your three songs carry you.

Today's twist: You'll commit to a writing practice. The frequency and the amount of time you choose to spend today — and moving forward —

are up to you, but we recommend a minimum of fifteen uninterrupted minutes per day.

The basic unit of writing practice is the timed exercise.

– Natalie Goldberg

Author [Natalie Goldberg](#) says to “burn through to first thoughts, to that place where energy is unobstructed by social politeness or the internal censor.” Here are some of her rules of free writing practice from [Writing Down the Bones](#), which we recommend you keep in mind:

- **Keep your hand moving.** (Don’t pause to reread the line you’ve just written. That’s stalling and trying to get control of what you’re saying.)
- **Don’t cross out.** (That is editing as you write. Even if you write something you didn’t mean to write, leave it.)
- **Don’t worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar.** (Don’t even care about staying within the margins and lines on the page.)
- **Lose control.**
- **Don’t think. Don’t get logical.**
- **Go for the jugular.** (If something comes up in your writing that is scary or naked, dive right into it. It probably has lots of energy.)

Jorge Luis Borges said: “Writing is nothing more than a guided dream.” So, what are you waiting for? Get writing. Fifteen minutes. Go. And then, do it again tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after.

4

SERIALLY LOST

Write about a loss: something (or someone) that was part of your life, and isn't any more.

This doesn't need to be a depressing exercise; you can write about that time you lost the three-legged race at a picnic. What's important is reflecting on this experience and what it meant for you — how it felt, why it happened, and what changed because of it.

Today's twist: Make today's post the first in a three-post series.

Our blogs are often made of standalone posts, but using them to take readers on longer journeys is an immersive experience for them — and you. It allows you to think bigger and go deeper into an

idea, while using a hook that keeps readers coming back.

A series can take many forms:

- Recurring features of the same type of post, like *The Stakes' Game of Thrones recaps* or *Chronicles of an Anglo-Swiss' responses to daily prompts*.
- Posts on the same topic, where each builds on the last, like *Literature and Libations' multi-part posts on becoming a beer writer*.
- Fiction, where each post gives readers the next chapter or a new story, like the work at *Flashes in the Pan* and *300 Stories*.

We also have advice that [might help](#). If you decide to go serial, upcoming chapters cover parts two and three, so don't worry about writing everything now or having to shoehorn the other posts in.

You only need to write the first post in the series today — we'll prompt you to write parts two and three in upcoming chapters.

5

BE BRIEF

You stumble upon a random letter on the path. You read it. It affects you deeply, and you wish it could be returned to the person to which it's addressed. Write a story about this encounter.

Today's twist: Approach this post in as few words as possible.

None of us will ever know the whole story in other words. We can only collect a bag full of shards that each seem perfect.

— From *100 Word Story*'s [About page](#)

Brevity is the goal of this task, although “brief” can mean five words or five-hundred words. You might write a fifty-word story, as writer Vincent Mars publishes on his blog, [Boy in the Hat](#). Or you might tell your tale in precisely one-hun-

dred words, like the folks at [100 Word Story](#) — an approach that forces you to question every word.

For writers who tend to write more, a longer word count may be considered concise, too. At [Brevity](#), writers publish nonfiction of seven-hundred-fifty words or less: there is space to develop a piece, yet a focus on succinctness.

For inspiration, browse two fifty-word stories — on [the silence between a husband and wife](#), or a story on [time and a missed connection](#) — or [these one-hundred words by H. Edwards](#) to see how others write clever concise tales.

6

A CHARACTER-BUILDING EXPERIENCE

Who's the most interesting person (or people) you've met this year?

Our stories are inevitably linked to the people around us. We are social creatures: from the family members and friends who've known us since childhood, to the coworkers, service providers, and strangers who populate our world (and, at times, leave an unexpected mark on us).

Today, write a post focusing on one — or more — of the people that have recently entered your life, and tell us how your narratives intersected. It can be your new partner, your newborn child, or the friendly barista whose real story you'd love to learn

(or imagine), or any other person you've met for the first time in the past year.

Today's twist: Turn your post into a character study.

In displaying the psychology of your characters, minute particulars are essential. God save us from vague generalizations!

– Anton Chekhov, Letter to Alexander Chekhov; May 10, 1886

Describing people — whether real or fictional — in a way that channels their true essence is an invaluable skill for any writer. Through the careful accumulation of details, great authors morph their words into vivid, flesh-and-bones creations in our minds. How can you go about shaping your portrait of a person? Some ideas to explore:

Don't just list their features. Tell us something about how their physical appearance shapes the way they act and engage with others. For example, see how the author of [this moving photo essay](#), which documents the final weeks of a woman dying of cancer, captures the kernel of the woman's spirit with a short, masterful statement:

Her eyes told stories that her voice didn't have the power to articulate and she had a kindness that immediately made me feel like we had been friends for years.

Give us a glimpse of what makes this person unique. We all have our own quirks, mannerisms, and individual gestures, both physical and linguistic. If you're looking for inspiration, read this blog-

ger's [portrait of her French host family](#) — after reading the first two paragraphs, you already have intimate knowledge of who these people are and what drives them.

7

GIVE AND TAKE

Write a post based on the contrast between two things — whether people, objects, emotions, places, or something else.

Remember those “compare and contrast” essays in composition class, in which you’re forced to create a clunky juxtaposition of two arguments? Just because that particular form was a bore doesn’t mean that opposition has no place in your writing.

Bringing together two different things — from the abstract and the inanimate to the living and breathing — creates a natural source of tension, and conflict drives writing forward. It makes your reader want to continue to the next sentence, to the next page. So, focus on your two starkly different siblings, or your competing love for tacos and mac-

arons, or whether thoughts are more powerful than words, or...you get the idea.

Today's twist: write your post in the form of a dialogue. You can create a strong opposition between the two speakers — a lovers' quarrel or a fierce political debate, for example. Or you could aim to highlight the difference in tone and style between the two different speakers — your call!

If you'd like more guidance, check out these [ten tips on writing solid dialogue](#). In case you're intimidated by dialogue tags — all those “he said,” “she whispered,” etc., [here's a useful overview](#).

Emulating people's speech in written form takes practice, and creating two distinct voices could help you see (and hear) the different factors that play into the way we speak, from our diction and accent to our vocabulary and (creative?) use of grammar. (We'll discuss the topic of voice more formally later in the course; for now, take a stab at writing dialogue on your own.)

8

DEATH TO ADVERBS

Go to a local café, park, or public place and report on what you see. Get detailed: leave no nuance behind.

Thoughtful writers create meaning by choosing precise words to create vivid pictures in the reader's mind. As you strive to create strong imagery, *show your readers what's going on; avoid telling them.*

Today's twist: write an adverb-free post. If you'd rather not write a new post, revisit and edit a previous one: excise your adverbs and replace them with strong, precise verbs.

The sin of telling often begins with adverbs. Author Stephen King says that, for writers, the road to hell is paved with adverbs:

The adverb is not your friend.

Adverbs...are words that modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They're the ones that usually end in *-ly*. Adverbs, like the passive voice, seem to have been created with the timid writer in mind....With adverbs, the writer usually tells us he or she is afraid he/she isn't expressing himself/herself clearly, that he or she is not getting the point or the picture across.

Instead of using adverbs as a crutch, rely on strong verbs to convey emotional qualities that imbue your writing with nuance, allowing the reader to fire up their imagination. Consider, for example:

“She walked proudly out the door.”

Remove the adverb “proudly” and replace it with a strong verb to denote how she walked:

She *strutted* out the door.

She *sashayed* out the door.

She *flounced* out the door.

Each example connotes the emotion with which “she” moved, creating a more vivid picture than “proudly” ever could.

9

POINT OF VIEW

A man and a woman walk through the park together, holding hands. They pass an old woman sitting on a bench. The old woman is knitting a small, red sweater. The man begins to cry. Write this scene.

Today's twist: write the scene from three different points of view: from the perspective of the man, then the woman, and finally the old woman.

If point of view was an object, it would be William Carlos Williams' infamous red wheelbarrow; everything depends on it.

Consider a car/pedestrian accident: the story differs depending on whether you're the driver, the pedestrian, or the woman across the street who

witnessed the horror. Everyone will tell a different story if asked to recount the event.

Shifting point of view can be your best friend if you've got writers' block. If you're stuck or you feel your writing is boring and lifeless, Craig Nova, author of *All the Dead Yale Men*, [suggests shifting the point of view](#) from which your story is told:

Take point of view, for example. Let's say you are writing a scene in which a man and a woman are breaking up. They are doing this while they are having breakfast in their apartment. But the scene doesn't work. It is dull and flat.

Applying the [notion] mentioned above, the solution would be to change point of view. That is, if it is told from the man's point of view, change it to the woman's, and if that doesn't work, tell it from the point of view of the neighborhood, who is listening through the wall in the apartment next door, and if that doesn't work have this neighbor tell the story of the break up, as he hears it, to his girlfriend. And if that doesn't work tell it from the point of view of a burglar who is in the apartment, and who hid in a closet in the kitchen when the man and woman who are breaking up came in and started arguing.

10

HAPPY (INSERT SPECIAL OCCASION HERE)!

Tell us about your favorite childhood meal — the one that was always a treat, that meant “celebration,” or that comforted you and has deep roots in your memory.

Free free to focus on any aspect of the meal, from the food you ate to the people who were there to the event it marked.

Today’s twist: Tell the story in your own distinct voice.

You own everything that happened to you. Tell your stories. If people wanted you to write warmly about them, they should have behaved better.

– Anne Lamott, [Bird by Bird](#)

The biggest thing that separates you from every other blogger in the world is your voice. Finding (and being confident in) our voices is one of the biggest challenges in writing, and it's easy to lose our voices when we're worried about being liked by everyone, or when we compare ourselves to others.

While it's true that embracing your voice will mean that not everyone loves you, the people who do will love you a lot. Exhibit A: [The Bloggess](#). Is she the only person who writes about parenting, mental health, and cats? Far from it. Is her style for everyone? Nope. Does she have a huge cadre of loyal readers who are drawn to her unique voice? Definitely.

Write today's post as if you're relaying the story to your best friend over a cup of coffee (or glass of wine — your call). Don't worry if it feels like you ramble a bit, or a four-letter-word sneaks in, or it feels different from what you usually publish. Take a deep breath, tell the story in your own words, and send it out the virtual door.

11

SIZE MATTERS

Tell us about the home where you lived when you were twelve. Which town, city, or country? Was it a house or an apartment? A boarding school or foster home? An airstream or an RV? Who lived there with you?

But first, consider this passage:

The man rode hard through the woods. The black horse's effort lay in lather. The sun beat down from high overhead. Dark birds circled, drifted, and then returned. The land baked, and dust hung suspended.

Is this not the most boring paragraph you've read in a long time — perhaps ever? We've got portent, a racing rider, and a forbidding landscape. Together, these should offer excitement and intrigue, but the words lay on the page, limp and dead. Why? Sen-

tence length. Each sentence contains exactly seven words. The repetitive, seven-word cadence lulls you to sleep instead of piquing your interest.

So write with a combination of short, medium, and long sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Don't just write words. Write music.

– Gary Provost, *100 Ways to Improve Your Writing*

Mixing up the lengths of your sentences creates variety for the reader and makes for much more interesting reading.

Today's twist: pay attention to your sentence lengths and use short, medium, and long sentences as you compose your response about the home you lived in when you were twelve.

12

DARK CLOUDS ON THE VIRTUAL HORIZON

Write a post inspired by a real-world conversation.

We don't write in a bubble — we write in the world, and what we say is influenced by our experiences. Today, take a cue from something you've overheard and write a post inspired by a real-life conversation. Revisit a time when you wish you'd spoken up, reminisce about an important conversation that will always stick with you, or tune in to a

conversation happening around you right now and write your reaction. Take time to listen — to what you hear around you, or what your memories stir up.

I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen.
– Ernest Hemingway

Today’s twist: include an element of foreshadowing in the beginning of your post.

At its most basic, foreshadowing gives readers a roadmap to what will happen later in your post — a subtle detail planted in the back of a reader’s mind, like a telling piece of dialogue or a strategic mention of an object that hints at what’s to come. When an author tells us there are dark clouds on the horizon, we know something negative will happen soon.

This doesn’t mean your post has to have a Shocking! Twist! à la *The Usual Suspects* or Shirley Jackson’s classic short story, “[The Lottery](#).” It just means you’ll give readers some clues as you go — a sense of what will happen next, information that might be important later, or a detail that you’ll explain in your conclusion.

We’re ready to go wherever you want to lead us.

13

SERIALLY FOUND

As part of chapter four, you wrote a post about losing something. Today, write about finding something.

Tell us about the time you retrieved your favorite t-shirt from your ex. Or when you accidentally stumbled upon your fifth-grade journal in your parents' attic. Or how about the moment you found out the truth about a person whose history or real nature you thought you'd figured out. Interpret this theme of "finding something" however you see fit.

Today's twist: if you wrote chapter four's post as the first in a series, use this one as the second installment — loosely defined.

You could pick up the action where you stopped, or jump backward or forward in time. You

might write about the same topic, but use a different style, or use the same style to tackle a neighboring topic.

Not sure how to approach continuity? Here's a time-tested tip: pick a favorite book or two. Read the last page of chapter one, then the first page of chapter two. How did the author choose to connect these two separate-but-connected narrative units?

We'd like to stress, though, that the idea behind today's assignment isn't necessarily to write "chapter two" of a neat, predetermined sequence — though you could do that, too, of course — but to think more intently about the idea of continuity and designing long-term writing projects.

14

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Pick up the nearest book and flip to page 29. What's the first word that jumps off the page? Use this word as your springboard for inspiration. If you need a boost, Google the word and see what images appear, and then go from there.

Today's twist: write the post in the form of a letter.

You have a number of options: you can write a letter to the word or an image, or an open letter to the world inspired by the word. You could pen a series of imaginary notes between you and a friend, or between two fictional characters, or between old you and young you.

Using a letter format can help you find new ways to build engaging scenes and stories. If your word was “Monday,” you could write:

I have a bad case of the Mondays.

But you could also write:

Dear Monday,

I admit it: I’m never happy to see you. I dread you in the morning, and on the drive to work, and from what I see on my Facebook feed, no one else likes you, either.

Get it together, Monday.

Sincerely,

Me

(Hat tip to [Cheri Lucas Rowlands](#) for this brilliant summation of Mondays.)

For more inspiration, check out some of [our favorite letters published](#) on [Word-Press.com](#). A few recent letters to things, such as [one addressed to cancer](#) and [another to a pair of boobs](#), might offer ideas.

15

YOUR VOICE WILL FIND YOU

Think about an event you've attended and loved. Your hometown's annual fair. That life-changing music festival. A conference that shifted your worldview. Imagine you're told it will be cancelled forever or taken over by an evil corporate force.

How does that make you feel?

Let's consider your voice again. This topic can be tricky, as you might not be sure what your voice sounds like — yet. But it's not that it's not there, as Chuck Wendig explains in his [“Ten Things I'd Like to Say to Young Writers”](#) post. It just takes time to hone it:

You will chase your voice like a dog chasing a car, but you'll never catch it. Because you were your voice all along. You were never the dog. You were always the car.

Our favorite writers, from Jane Austen to Gabriel Garcia Marquez to Paul Auster, have distinct voices. You read their writing and hear their words in your head. From their word choices, to the rhythm of their sentences, to the intimate spaces they create — right there on the page — they sound like no one else but them.

Today's twist: While writing this post, focus again on your own voice. Pay attention to your word choice, tone, and rhythm. Read each sentence *aloud* multiple times, making edits as you read through. Before you hit "Publish," read your entire piece out loud to ensure it sounds like you.

16

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

Imagine you had a job in which you had to sift through forgotten or lost belongings. Describe a day in which you come upon something peculiar, or tell a story about something interesting you find in a pile.

For inspiration, ponder the phrase “lost and found.” What do you think about or visualize when you read this phrase? For an elementary schooler, it might be a box in their classroom, full of forgotten jackets and random toys. For a frequent traveler, it might be a facility in an airport, packed with lost phones, abandoned bags, and misplaced items.

For chapter four, you wrote about losing some-

thing. For chapter thirteen, you then wrote about finding something. **So, today's twist: If you'd like to continue our serial challenge, also reflect on the theme of "lost and found" more generally in this post.**

By the end of Writing 101, you'll have multiple posts around a theme — material you could thread together in a longform piece.

Questions to think about as you write your post:

- What have you learned about loss over the years?
- What does it feel like to find an object that was once important to you?
- When can reconnecting go horribly wrong?
- When are things better left buried and forgotten?

In your "lost and found" tale, tell us something larger — a life lesson, perhaps — about finding and losing something.

17

YOUR PERSONALITY ON THE PAGE

We all have anxieties, worries, and fears. What are you scared of? Address one of your worst fears.

Today's twist: Write this post in a style distinct from your own.

Earlier in Writing 101, we talked about voice: that elusive element that sets you apart from every other writer out there. [Style](#), however, is different. Your writing style might affect your voice, but ultimately style and voice aren't the same thing.

While your voice is your own, and something

that’s innately you, style is much broader. You might prefer long and complex sentences, or sentences with a lot of commas and layers building upon each other, or perhaps intentional run-ons and thoughts bleeding into the next and no pauses and lots of imagery and never-ending moments that run onto the next page.

Or, you might write short sentences. Fragments, even. Simple prose.

Think back to your assignment on sentence lengths. What kinds of sentences do you prefer, or find yourself writing naturally?

Style is the answer to everything.

A fresh way to approach a dull or dangerous thing.

To do a dull thing with style is preferable to doing a dangerous thing without it.

To do a dangerous thing with style is what I call art.

— Charles Bukowski

Novelist Raymond Chandler also called style the most durable thing in your writing — “a projection of personality, the product of emotion and perception.” While writers have their own styles, [style can be mimicked](#) — you can approach a piece intentionally to create a certain effect. (We once [asked writers to write in Hunter S. Thompson’s gonzo style](#) — take a peek for inspiration.)

If you need a boost, consider these examples of style: [Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*](#), Ernest Hemingway’s “Hills Like White Elephants,” and [Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*](#).

18

HONE YOUR POINT OF VIEW

The neighbourhood has seen better days, but Mrs. Pauley has lived there since before anyone can remember. She raised a family of six boys, who've all grown up and moved away. Since Mr. Pauley died three months ago, she'd had no income. She's fallen behind in the rent. The landlord, accompanied by the police, have come to evict Mrs. Pauley from the house she's lived in for forty years.

Today's prompt: write this story in first person, told by the twelve-year-old sitting on the stoop across the street.

First person, second person, third person, whew! [Point of view is a type of narrative mode,](#)

which is the method by which a story's plot is conveyed to the audience. Point of view tells not only *who* is telling the story, but also *how* it is told. Consider a recent short story published on *The Worship Collective*, “[Funny Things](#),” in which the narrator is a child who has passed away.

Need a refresher on first-person narration? Recall Scout Finch, the six-year-old first-person narrator of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She tells the story through her eyes:

It was times like these when I thought my father, who hated guns and had never been to any wars, was the bravest man who ever lived.

“Remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.’ That was the only time I ever heard Atticus say it was a sin to do something, and I asked Miss Maudie about it.”

Today's twist: For those of you who want an extra challenge, think about more than simply writing in first-person point of view — build this twelve-year-old as a character. Reveal at least one personality quirk, for example, either through spoken dialogue or inner monologue.

Refer to some of the exercises we've done on character, dialogue, and even sentence length to help craft this person. All of these storytelling elements can combine to create a strong point of view.

19

DON'T STOP THE ROCKIN'

Today is a free writing day. Write at least four-hundred words, and once you start typing, don't stop. No self-editing, no trash-talking, and no second guessing: just go. Bonus points if you tackle an idea you've been playing with but think is too silly to post about.

I want you to let it all hang out. So does writer [Anne Lamott](#). At the risk of turning *The Daily Post* into an Anne Lamott fangirl blog, no one motivates me the way she does. Every time you sit down to write and think your idea is too stupid, too uninteresting, too random, or too unoriginal to be committed to the page, let Anne give you a gentle but firm nudge:

The rational mind doesn't nourish you. You assume that it gives you the truth, because the rational mind is the golden calf that this culture worships, but this is not true. Rationality squeezes out much that is rich and juicy and fascinating.

Don't look at your feet to see if you are doing it right. Just dance.

Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people.

I don't think you have time to waste not writing because you are afraid you won't be good at it.

You'll never feel so good about writing down every half-baked non-sequitur that comes out of the recesses of your lizard brain. And if you're tempted to reply, "That's easy for her to say, she's a famous writer!" I give you:

I know some very great writers, writers you love who write beautifully and have made a great deal of money, and not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic and confident. Not one of them writes elegant first drafts. All right, one of them does, but we do not like her very much.

Four-hundred words. One at a time. Go.

20

THE THINGS WE TREASURE

Tell us the story of your most-prized possession.

It's the final chapter of the book already?! Let's make sure we end it with a bang — or, in our case, with some furious collective tapping on our keyboards. For this final assignment, lead us through the history of an object that bears a special meaning to you.

A family heirloom, a flea market find, a childhood memento — all are fair game. What matters is that, through your writing, you breathe life into that object, moving your readers enough to understand its value.

Today's twist: We extolled the virtues of brevity

back in chapter five, but now, let's jump to the other side of the spectrum and turn to **longform writing**. Let's celebrate the drawn-out, slowly cooked, wide-shot narrative.

How long is long? That's entirely up to you to decide. You can go with a set number — 750, 1000, or 2000 words, or more (or less!). Alternatively, you could choose your longest post thus far in the challenge, and raise the bar by, say, 300 words, 20 percent, three paragraphs — whatever works for you.

Take time to brainstorm, write notes if you'd like, and read other longer pieces for inspiration. For example, you could visit the [Longreads topic page](#) in the WordPress.com Reader, or dive into one of the [excellent picks on Longreads.com](#).

If you're interested in tips on formatting longer posts on your blog, we have [all the info you need](#). More writing inspiration? Check out [this great collection of pieces on writing longform prose](#) by notable authors like Truman Capote, Guy Talese, and Katherine Boo.