I’m Going to Write a Brilliant Poem—Right Now!

Unfortunately it doesn’t usually work like that—except for a lucky few! Writing is a process. It isn’t about throwing the throttle forward and taking off. In order to write the way we want to write, we have to prepare and practice. Writing requires a plan.

Writing also requires practice. Like running, the more we do it the better we get at it. Some days we don’t want to run and we resist every step of the way but we do it anyway. We practice whether we want to or not. We don’t wait around for inspiration or a deep desire to run. It’ll never happen, especially if we’re out of shape and have been avoiding it. But if we run regularly, we train our mind to cut through or ignore the resistance. We just do it. And suddenly in the middle of the run, we find we’re loving it! That’s how writing is too. Once we’re deep into it, we wonder what took us so long to finally settle down at our computer. Through practice we actually get better. We learn to trust ourselves and our writing.

The best way not to write successfully is to sit down and say I’m going to write a brilliant poem right now. That attitude will freeze us right away because even saying brilliant implies judgment, making it difficult to write that first sentence. If every time we sit down to write, we expect something great, writing will usually be a disappointment.

Instead, sit down without any expectations. Turn off your inner critic and give yourself the space to write without any predetermined destination. If you’re practicing your writing, choose a topic of interest to you, or maybe get started on an English essay assignment, then just write whatever comes to mind for the next five minutes—or longer if the ideas are still flowing. We call this fastwriting, and it’s a great way to get those ideas down on paper. Start anywhere and just keep typing. Put down anything that comes into your head. Let loose. Write it all. Punctuation? Whatever. Sentence structure? Doesn’t matter now. Grammar? Who needs it? The best part about fastwriting is that you don’t have to think about any rules of English grammar or punctuation. You are totally free to write whatever you want to write about, and write it just how it comes into your head. The only thing you have to do is keep writing—anything and everything, and even nothing . . . just write down that you don’t have any more ideas, and for sure another one will pop into you head! And keep in mind that correcting your spelling or backtracking for any reason is not an option. The end result may be an incredibly random collection of ideas, but they’re your ideas and you’re brilliant! You may have just created the essence for a brilliant two-page essay for your English class. Of course, you probably won’t use everything you’ve written in your fastwrite in your essay, but that’s okay. You’ve got lots of ideas to work with. Now you can go through your fastwrite creation, pull out all the great ideas you came up with, and start refining you brilliant piece of writing.

Just keep practicing until you get comfortable with writing and before you know it, you’ll be writing that brilliant poem or that great American novel!