Writing is a Process

*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 generate ideas, prepare and practice. Writing requires a plan.

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—and start the process of writing. The **Creative Discovery Process** is the first essential **Quantum Writing** step. It can be used for any writing assignment and consists of the following:

**Cluster & Star:**
This is really a brainstorming session where you generate ideas—lots and lots of ideas. First you come up with a main topic, then sub-topics, and finally details of sub-topics, all linked to the main topic in the middle of your page. After you’ve got all your ideas down, you then put stars on the most relevant of everything on your page.

**Mind Map:**
Working with all your Cluster & Star ideas and focusing on those you’ve starred, you create a mind map. With this mind map you’re starting to refine your ideas and the content of your written piece.

**Fastwrite:**
This is when you turn off your inner critic and give yourself the space to just write about all those thoughts your came up with in your Cluster & Star session and your Mind Map. Checking your mind map now and then, just write whatever comes to mind about those topics and keep writing as long as the ideas are still flowing and that keyboard is still busy. This is a great way to get those ideas down on paper. Just keep typing. Put down anything that comes into your head. Let loose. Write it all. Punctuation? Not now. 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. Just 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!

**Draft:**
And now you move on to your first draft. You may have just created the essence of a brilliant two-page essay for your English class. Of course, you probably won’t include everything from your fastwrite in your essay, and 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 creating your final copy. Before you know it you will have refined your draft and created a brilliant piece of writing!
One thing we need to add here is that good writing 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.

Just keep practicing this Creative Discovery Process and soon Quantum Writing will become easier and easier until you get comfortable with writing. And before you know it, you’ll be writing that brilliant poem or that great American novel!