

Directed Freewriting Protocol

The Rules:

For a given period of time, write all thoughts that come to your mind on a given topic. Write continuously, without stopping. Errors of syntax, grammar, and punctuation are of no importance. There is no right or wrong way to write your thoughts. If you don't have more to say, you may simply write, "I don't know what to say." It is important, however, to continue to write, as new and surprising insights may occur unexpectedly. We can compare freewriting to taking a sample of water from a flowing river. We need to catch the water throughout the designated time or the sample will be incomplete. In this case we are taking a "sample" of what flows in our minds.

Sometimes freewriting may be produced with no intention to share. In this protocol it is produced with the intention that it be shared. As participants may have written material that would make them uncomfortable to read, they should be given the option to mention the kind of material they wrote rather than to read their writing directly. Participants are encouraged, however, to read what they wrote verbatim and not to extemporize on what they wrote. Other participants in team or table groups will listen attentively, with pen in hand to take notes. The notes will prove useful in discussions after members of the group have shared their writing.

Note that this is a useful practice for developing reading, writing, speaking, listening, and presenting skills in a classroom. The non-judgmental aspects make it ideal for cultivating a climate where all students are free to take the risks necessary to develop their ideas and their skills.