



Lines open Mon - Fri 10am - 6pm

0808 801 0338

Free to call from all landlines and mobiles

Creative Writing

Whether you think you have what it takes to be the next J.K. Rowling or you just enjoy pondering over a poem, there are loads of ways to start writing, keep writing and improve your skills. All you really need is a pen and paper plus a little bit of inspiration.

Getting Started

Getting past the first hurdle can be harder than you think – every writer has experienced the fear of being faced with that blank page. Like all creative processes different people will approach their writing in different ways. Some people like to write a complete plot outline before they start writing a story while others let things develop as they go along. You will gradually find what works best for you. One of the easiest ways to start is to do a few creative writing exercises. There are loads of fantastic resources for budding writers, on the internet, as well as books and magazines. Browse through a few ideas and see what appeals to you. Competitions are also really good for focusing your thoughts. You could even ask a friend to give you a picture, a situation or sentence and challenge you to base a piece of writing around it.

For writing exercises ideas and competitions go to:

- *The Writing Room at the Arvon Foundation*, www.arvonfoundation.org
- *The Scottish Poetry Library*, www.spl.org.uk
- The Scottish Book Trust, www.scottishbooktrust.com

Don't worry if you are not that pleased with what comes out on the page at first, most writers will look over there writing again and again, making changes before they are happy with the end result. Writer David Almond comments:

“Don't think too hard as you start. Yes, have a notion of where your story might go and how it will develop, but don't think that you need to begin with a fiendishly clever plot, or with a great and original idea. Don't feel that you have to be clever or sophisticated. You don't need to begin with a detailed plan. You don't need to know at the start where your story will go and where it will end.”

(Read David Almond's writer's workshop on the Arvon Foundation website.)



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Don't get stuck. Sitting still at your desk is not always the best way to fire up your imagination. If nothing is happening then go out for a walk and mull over some ideas along the way or spend some time telling someone about them. Sometimes inspiration comes when you are not expecting it. Writer in residence at the Scottish Book Trust, Keith Gray recommends carrying a notebook round with you to note down ideas events and situations. Jot down any phrases or descriptions that come to mind as well as real life stories from newspapers or magazines that catch your attention or even snippets of conversations you hear.

Keep reading other people's work and don't be afraid to use plot ideas from things you read – even Shakespeare did that! As long as you don't copy it word for word you can take inspiration from elsewhere and make the story your own.

Keeping Going

Writing can be a great hobby and a fantastic way of expressing your feelings and emotions but if you want to keep improving for your own enjoyment or other peoples, it can be hard work and also takes a lot of self discipline.

Get connected. Showing your work to other people for the first time can be nerve wracking but if you want to improve it's important to get their opinions. Joining a writing group is a great idea. You will get other people's reactions to your work and having regular meetings will help give you the discipline needed to persevere with that story, play or poem you are working on. If there are no writing groups nearby you could always try joining a group on-line.

Get advice. Get inside information from professional writers by going to talks at book festivals (For book festivals in your area go to www.youngscotwow.org) or reading writer's magazines and websites. There is loads of helpful information and advice out there to help you learn how to develop your characters and plot or experiment with different kinds of poetry. Take a look at the online writing master class with Keith Gray at the Scottish Book Trust by going to their website. You could even sign up for a course ...

- Short courses for over 16's, are held at the Arvon Foundation at Moniack Mhor
- For details of university courses in Creative Writing go to the UCAS website (www.ucas.ac.co.uk) or phone the Young Scot InfoLine (0808 801 0338)



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What Next

If you think you've got talent don't keep it to yourself. You've put in the hard work, now you need to get your writing out there. Competitions are a great way to flaunt your skills and get noticed. There are literally hundreds to enter so if at first you don't succeed ...

Writer's magazines are often keen to give space to new writers even if they haven't been published before. The internet is a great alternative too. Many websites, including The Arvon foundation allows you to upload your work on the site for all to see. You can even send your work to Young Scot for our L@b section of the website. Send your work to us at arts@youngscot.org.

- Magazines, Mslexia (for female writers), The Writing Magazine and New Writer's Magazine, as well as the Artists and Writers yearbook, contain lists of current competitions and opportunities to submit your work to other publications.
- New Writing Scotland publishes works by writers resident in Scotland or Scots by birth or upbringing, www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/NWSsubs.html
- Look up writing competitions on the Young Scot What's on Where website at www.youngscotwow.org.

Getting your writing published

If you are determined to see your novel in print make sure get hold of a copy of *The Writers Year Book* (from any large book store). As well as providing an up to date list of publishers it also has details on how to write a synopsis of a novel to send away with your first chapter or details of how to get yourself an agent who will market your work for you. Don't be put off too easily – remember even J.K. Rowling had to read countless rejection letters before Harry Potter was finally accepted.

Creative Scotland offers help to Scottish Writer's through the Writer's Factory, including writer's bursaries and fellowships. For more information tel: 0845 603 6000, email: enquiries@creativescotland.com, website: www.creativescotland.com.

Last updated May 2011