

Creative Writing Revision Exercises

These exercises are about making big changes in order to better understand the heart of your story and/or your style. Choose one that sounds interesting, fun, or appropriate to your goals. You might try something just to stretch your writing muscles or make serious revisions to the piece you're working on.

Once you've completed the task, see what's lost and what's discovered. Notice what's important to maintain and what you'd like to add to or maximize in the original. Reflect on what felt good, what was hard, and what you'd like to practice more.

Alternate Genre/Style/Form

Try rewriting your piece in an entirely new way:

- If it's a story, write it as a poem (or vice versa).
- If it's a sonnet, write it free-verse.
- If it's personal, write it like non-fiction.
- If it's funny, make it dramatic.
- Try writing it in nothing but dialogue.
- Try writing it through description alone.
- Think of your own way to upend the piece or just create a fun challenge.

Then ask yourself: How is your chosen genre/style/form serving you? How can you make the most of it? Could aspects of other styles improve the story you're telling?

Alternate Perspective

Choose a secondary character, a background character, or even an object in your existing piece and rewrite a scene, a chapter, or the whole thing from that point of view. How do these different characters see and experience the story? What do they notice, feel? What are their relationships with other characters?

This exercise might inspire a new way of telling the story. Even if you want to keep your original perspective, consider developing the side characters as deeply as the central ones and notice how that changes the piece.

Favorite Freewrite

This one similarly challenges you to explore the underdeveloped. It might help you add detail and nuance to your writing. Choose a tiny detail to explore fully in a freewrite:

- Profile a single character—even a side character or object.
- Describe a single object or gesture, or address the five senses in a single scene.
- Create a backstory for a small event, a single moment, a relationship, etc.

What did you learn about your characters, your story? Is there anything worth including? How can you bring just a sense of that character's history into your writing?

Blackout

This strategy is intended for poetry, but could potentially be used for other forms, too.

1. Print out your piece on paper.
2. Pick out a big, dark marker—something that will easily cover up printed text.
3. Cross out as much as possible. Redact until it's just the core—the most important, interesting, impactful words and phrases.

What's the result? Is it the poem you really meant to write? If not, try writing around those core remnants, only adding what enhances them.

Alternate Ending

Is your ending unsatisfactory? Are you unsure how to end the story/poem at all? Allow yourself (or force yourself) to come up with multiple possible conclusions.

- Happy endings that tie up loose ends
- Unexpected twists
- Cliff-hangers that leave readers wondering
- Versions that change your intended message or feeling
- Versions that maintain the meaning

Choose one or two to write out fully. Maybe share different versions with different friends or tutors and see how readers respond.