

The Quickwrite: A Brief Introduction

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<http://www.upei.ca/uwc/wac/strategies/quickwrite.html>

The **quickwrite** is one of the most basic of WAC strategies. It involves asking a question, giving people a set amount of time for responding (usually between one to ten minutes), and either hearing or reading the responses. The **quickwrite** can be modified endlessly, depending on circumstances. It also has led to a variety of WAC off-shoots.

Benefits:

- It promotes spontaneity and freedom in writing.
- It encourages writing as a habit or practice.
- It promotes critical thinking and focus.
- It gives students time to collect thoughts before verbalizing to others.
- It has great potential time-saver for instructors, since quickwrites do not necessarily have to be read by the latter.
- Students can respond verbally from their quickwrites (reading directly or using the piece as a touchstone) or get peer response in groups. (Note: Be sure that some kind of response is given; a primary principle of WAC is that each writing exercise matters-- nothing is written that isn't somehow "witnessed").
- It provides a basis for collaborative peer work.

WAC Off-shoots:

- Critical thinking warm-ups: use the quickwrite at the start of a class to get students focused on a new concept, or the material from last class, or preparatory reading material, etc.
- Student-directed quickwrites: have students lead the quickwrite session, having prepared a question in advance and thought through a method for fielding the responses
- Class-closers (exit strategies): as with the warm-ups, use the quickwrite to prompt reflection through summary, synthesis, explanation, a question.

QUICK WRITE EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES:

1. The "Good Question"

The "Good Question" is a simple tool that encourages students to re-engage material they have encountered through the careful formulation in writing of a thoughtful question about that material.

Used at the end of a class, a presentation, demonstration, lecture segment, or other in-class experience, it can help students to reflect carefully on what they are learning, to inquire more deeply into a topic, and to identify areas where they would like assistance.

Students can also be requested to come to class prepared with one well-formulated "Good Question" that he or she poses to the class. The class reflects on the question in a quickwrite, which the instructor then discusses. This need not take much class time, but it gets students writing and thinking--and it allows instructors to assess how well students are processing material.

2. The One-Minute Paper

A popular off-shoot of the standard quickwrite, the One-Minute Paper can be used at the beginning of a class to help students focus on the matter at hand and get them thinking. You might ask them to summarize the main point of the last class (providing a bridge to the current lesson) or summarize a reading. The point is to get them writing immediately. You might have them exchange their One-Minute Papers with a partner and ask for a follow-up quickwrite that synthesizes the views. Or perhaps ask for a few randomly-selected samples and discuss them. Look for accuracy, precise language, and conciseness. Tell students constantly to ask themselves: What do I mean? Am I saying what I mean? Will my reader understand what I've written?

One-Minute Papers can also be used as a Classroom Assessment Technique at the end of a class. Direct the students to answer two questions: "What was the most important thing that you learned during today's class?" and "What important question do you still have?" This requires the students to evaluate what they remember and to reflect on how well they understand the material. Their responses can provide you with insights into how they are learning (or misunderstanding) the material.