

Creating a Writing Practice

Beck, English

Writing practice is like music practice or sports practice or yoga practice or meditation practice: *something you do every day* (or at least 5 times a week)—as routinely as brushing your teeth. You practice regularly for the discipline and for the cumulative effect. Why? Because it's the only way to develop as a writer, just as regular practice is the only way to develop as a musician or athlete. The most important thing is to make the practice *your own*: something you create, something you are proud and fond of.

When you practice something regularly, methodically, you are said to “have a practice”: *something fundamental to your character, your identity, your psyche.* Here are some suggestions:

Set aside a regular time to work. It may not be the same time every day, but it should be regular—at least 5 days a week, lasting 1 to 1½ hours. *Try to keep extending the amount of time you spend writing.*

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Set up your schedule a week in advance. Then stick to it, finding a replacement time if unexpected events happen. Occasionally, try a different schedule (is it better at night? in the morning? at mid-day?).

Follow a routine. Here's one possibility:

1. **Focus:** go into your felt sense (explained in Week II or III).
2. **Review** your course journal and game entries and **write reflective entries** on the notes and entries you've read. Focus particularly on game concept entries. (Hint: move quickly, making brief reflective entries on the most important ideas.)
3. **Read/analyze assigned readings** for how the writer played the writing games. Follow the techniques given in *The Curious Reader*, pp. 27 – 35—work especially with the dialogue journal concept.
4. **Play the assigned game(s).**
5. **Write a reflection** on your game experiences & skill development. (This is optional—it may be delayed until the next session.) *Then, either*
6. **Play a Focus & Development game** (see handout), a **Styling game** (see the “whole discourse” exercises in *The Writer's Options*: p. I-5 in the Index has a complete list), a **Structuring game**, or a **Formatting/Conventions game**. OR
7. **Work on drafting or revising or editing** a transactional paper or a D2L entry.

Always date and label your entries.

Set a timer when you begin and record the amount of time you spent practicing (record it both practice work, next to the date & entry label and on the “Course Requirements Check List”).

Following is a typical "Check List" that students keep to record their practice and grades. (I take it up at the end of the semester to keep in my files: it's one "page" in my grade book.)

Name: _____ Student ID #: _____

COURSE REQUIREMENTS CHECK LIST

Instructions: Keep this in the front of your Portfolio—update it daily. Activities not recorded are considered not done. False or inaccurate entries automatically lower your grade at least one letter.

1. **WRITING GAMES** # _____ (insert a tally mark for each game you do) Grade: _____

	#1	#2	#3	#4
Round 1				
Round 2				

3. **COURSE JOURNAL** Enter the time spent each week for each category. Use ¼ hours, e.g. 1¼ or 2½.

Eval #1	Eval #2	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV
Course Journal															
Game Playing															
Planning & Drafting															
Revising & Editing															

4. **TRANSACTIONAL PAPERS** Record ratings given on the evaluation rubric (process is scored at final portfolio review).

	Title	Focus	Content	Structure	Prose	Cv/Pres	Rhetoric	Grade	Revision
1									
2									
3									
4									

5. **D2L DISCUSSION** Enter the grades assigned in the D2L grade book for individual entries on line 1, the grades assigned to your group report entries on line 2. (Be sure to put the grade for the week you made the entry.) In the 3rd line, indicate the dates you read entries.

Week	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV
Individual Entries														
Group Report														
Reading Dates														

6. **PROGRESS REPORTS:** Mid-Semester _____ Final _____

7. **COURSE PORTFOLIO FORMAT & ORGANIZATION:** Evaluation #1 _____ Evaluation #2 _____

8. **PARTICIPATION** Enter the role assigned on the first row, the role actually played on the second row. Use 0 for an absence, PC for Project Coordinator, DA for Devil's Advocate, R for Recorder, E for Encourager.

I		II		III		IV		V		VI		VII		VIII		IX		X		XI		XII		XIII		XIV			
T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th	T	Th

Grading: For an "A," you must have at least an "A-" average in requirements #1 through #5 and not less than a "B" in #6 & #7. To earn an "A/B," you must have at least 3 "A-s" and not less than a "B" in the other four. To earn a "B," you must have at least a "B" in 6 activities. To earn a "B/C," you must have at least "B's" in 4 activities and not less than a "C" in the others. To earn a "C," you must have "C's" and above, not more than one "D's," no "F's." Weak engagement/participation will lower your overall grade.

A=100-94 A/B=93-90 B=89-85 B/C=84-81 C=80-74 D=73-65

FINAL GRADE (Don't write here.)	1. Writing Games _____	2. Quiz Games _____	3. Course Journal _____
4. Transactional _____	5. D2L _____	6. Progress Reports _____	7. Course Portfolio _____
8. Participation/Engagement _____	Course Grade _____		