

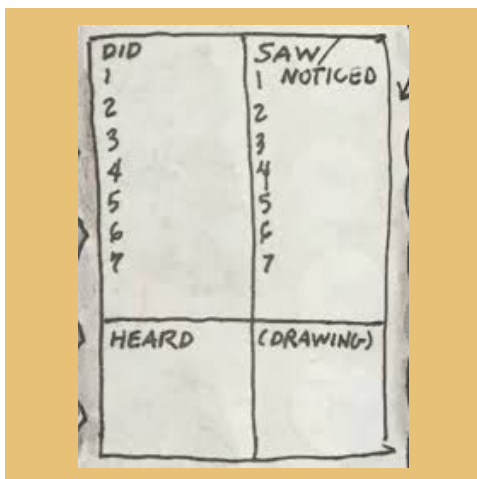
# TOP 5 WRITING EXERCISES

SKYROCKET YOUR SONGWRITING TO THE NEXT LEVEL  
SO YOU CAN WRITE YOUR BEST SONGS

## MORNING PAGES

Julia Cameron (The Artist's Way) is well known for this daily routine that gets your flow going.

Here's how it works: write three pages in your journal without stopping first thing in the morning. Even after 3 days you'll find the clutter starts to decrease and some good ideas start to reveal themselves. If you do nothing else, this is your foundation.



## 7 THINGS JOURNAL

Lynda Barry (Syllabus) calls it the Daily Diary or the Basic 5 Minute Diary. First you divide your page into 4 uneven quadrants. The top two will take up  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the page while the bottom two only  $\frac{1}{3}$ . In the top left make a list of 7 things you did today. In the top right make a list of 7 things you saw today. In the bottom left, write one thing you overheard or heard during your day, this could be a quote or just an idea. And in the bottom right draw a picture of one of the things. Doing this at the end of the day can be a great review of the day. You'll find yourself starting to pay more attention to little things you previously took for granted throughout your day, and this is a great habit for finding ideas for your songs.

## 5 FINGER APPROACH

Pat Pattison (Songwriting Without Boundaries) digs deep into sense-bound writing as a crucial starting place for songwriting.

**First**, set your timer to 5 or 10 minutes at least once a day and choose a prompt. You'll want to make this a habit, be consistent and your writing will flourish.

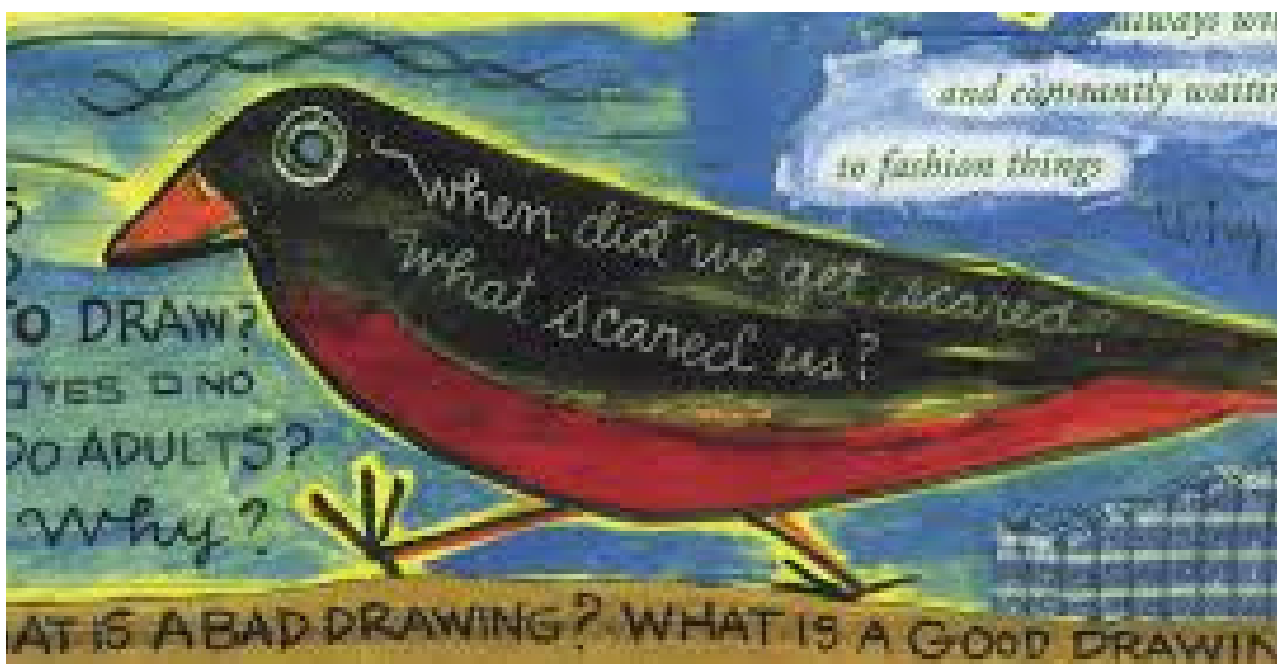
**Second**, write all the senses at the top of your page with each timed write. This will remind you of *how* you're going to write about what you're writing about. Here's the list: *Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch, Body and Motion*. Body refers to sensations inside the body, like a pounding headache or your heartbeat, and Motion refers to the sensation you have while in motion. For example what is it like to step off the boat or gallop on the horse?

**Third**, start with writing about objects. Take a look around you and describe what you see, perhaps a table, a window, a pillow. Write all the senses you can around that object and include associations as well if they arise.

**Fourth**, go to "who" writing and develop a character. Ask questions to learn about who they are, what they like, what their fears might be, and so on.

**Fifth**, finally you'll get to "when" and "where" which describe the time and location or setting. Focus on time of year, time of day or life event, and include as much detail about how the place feels. You can really start to paint the picture for the location itself where your song is taking place.

Take each prompt one at a time and sticking to it. these kinds of limitations make you a stronger writer in the end.



## WORD LADDERS

Jeff Tweedy (How to Write One Song) directs us to make a list of 10 verbs associated with a physician. Then write 10 nouns that are within your field of vision. Draw lines matching verbs and nouns that seem interesting or unlikely. Voila you have a ladder!

I've included the lists below. You draw the lines!

Examine	Cushion
Thump	Guitar
Prescribe	Wall
Listen	Turntable
Write	Sunlight
Scan	Window
Touch	Carpet
Wait	Drum
Charge	Microphone
Heal	Lightbulb

Don't be too serious here. Have fun and play with the ideas and maybe a phrase will emerge that you like and you can put that into your next song. Try writing a poem from these ideas and see what comes out!



## CUT-UP TECHNIQUE

David Bowie used this technique and Jeff Tweedy writes about it too. It's been around for a while as is just a fun way to mix up ideas when you're feeling stuck in a rut.

Here's what to do. Do a 5 minute timed write spacing your lines on the page far apart. Cut out each line and turn the strips of paper over. If you're doing this with a friend, mix the strips and take turns picking out a new strip. If you're on your own, take a few minutes changing the order around until a new idea emerges. Do another timed write on the new idea or write a poem. From that, see if there are lyrics that feel good.

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