

ACE Quick Guide to Generative Writing for Apply Tasks

What is Generative Writing?

After reviewing your Apply Task and outlining a plan of what you want to write, it can be difficult to actually translate this into a first written draft.

Generative writing is an **informal, exploratory technique that can be used to help draft content for an Apply Task**. It involves undertaking focused, timed writing exercises – typically on paper – **avoiding the urge to stop and edit** your work, even if mistakes occur.

The Benefits of Generative Writing



Reduces writing anxiety! When undertaking generative writing exercises, there is no need to worry about the work being 'correct' or presented in full, grammatical sentences; it is more about translating your initial thoughts into words on the page.



Boosts your confidence – getting words onto the page is often the hardest part of writing up an Apply Task. Practising generative writing can give you a confidence boost and sense of accomplishment, making you feel that writing up the rest of the task is achievable.



Helps pinpoint areas of strength and areas for improvement – enabling you to identify areas that you may need additional support with.



Streamlines the drafting process, allowing you to focus on and produce small, manageable sections of an Apply Task within a fixed amount of time.

(Adapted from University of Illinois, 2025)

How do I Undertake a Generative Writing Exercise?

1. Identify an Area of Focus



Prior to undertaking a generative writing exercise, it is important to establish a small, manageable area of focus. You will therefore need to **identify a particular section** of your Apply Task write up.

2. Set Up the Exercise

Next, **locate a pen and a blank sheet of paper**. You can then **title the page** with your chosen section of the Apply Task. This will keep you focused as you write!

You will also need to decide on the length of your generative writing exercise, **setting a timer on your phone or computer**. As you will be writing continuously once the timer is active, we recommend starting with **10-20 minutes**.

However, you can adapt the length of your generative writing exercises according to preference as well as your commitments at work and home.



3. Write Continuously

Once prepared, **start the timer** and write continuously on your chosen section until the time has elapsed.

The purpose of a generative writing exercise is not to produce perfect grammatically correct content. Your aim is to **keep the pen moving for the duration** of the exercise, translating your thoughts into words on the page.

As such, it is essential to **put aside the urge to edit or proofread as you write** – even if this means producing sentences that are nonsensical or deviate from your intended point.

There will be time to improve your work and, where necessary, exclude irrelevant content when the exercise is complete.



4. Assess Your Work

After the time has elapsed, **read over your work – underlining relevant points that may require further expansion, explanation or supporting evidence**. These can subsequently be typed up and polished.

At this stage, you may also feel some of the content you have produced is completely irrelevant. This is normal!

The objective is to think through writing, producing content for editing and removing your fear of the blank page.

Variations on Generative Writing

Generative writing exercises are **typically undertaken on paper to minimise potential distractions**. However, you may find it helpful to **try the following variations** on generative writing – reflecting on which method best suits your learning style.

1. Microsoft Word	Open a blank document and follow the method previously outlined. Try to minimise distractions by closing unnecessary programmes and applications such as your email inbox or internet browser prior to setting a timer.
2. Notes	If you prefer writing on the go , you can undertake generative writing exercises by using the notes application on your phone. Experiment with different locations such as coffee shops, public transportation on the way to or from work, or local parks until you determine which is most effective.
3. Voice Memo	Set a timer and record yourself speaking your ideas aloud in a voice memo. Afterwards, you can either transcribe the recording or take notes as you listen – identifying potential strengths and areas you need to improve or ask for support with. As you can record a voice memo anytime and anywhere , you may find it productive to walk or undertake simple household chores as you do so, clearing your mind and alleviating the pressure to compose fully developed thoughts.
4. Speech-to-Text	If you find it challenging to write on paper or in a document, you can also use a speech-to-text application (such as Microsoft Word's 'Dictate' function) to transcribe your ideas .

Reference List

University of Illinois (2025) *Freewriting*. Available at: <https://www.uis.edu/learning-hub/writing-resources/handouts/learning-hub/freewriting> (Accessed: 24 September 2026)



QA.com