

50 Creative Writing activities

Here are 50 writing activities for you to use as you like.

- You don't have to work through all of them to get the benefit.
- The first two sets of activities – 'list games' and 'finding / creating pictures' – work on their own but can be used to generate source material for the rest.
- These are suitable for most age groups, with some adaptation. (I've used them with adults and with children of all ages.) That said, I've pulled out the ten activities that are most suitable for younger children and made a separate list at the end.

List games

Use any of these games to create lists of words. Adapt the games to suit. Aim for a set number of words (5 or 10) or as many as you can do in a set time (say 1 minute or 5 minutes).

1. List the objects you can see in the space you are in or outside your window. Ordinary objects are fine. For instance, chair, coat, table.
2. Play 'word association'. Starting word: 'ocean'. (You can do this on your own if you're writing the words down, or in pairs if you're saying them out loud.)
3. Make a list of nature words. You can also invent your own categories: ocean words, beach words, rainforest words, music words, for example. Or use a curriculum topic if you like: Antarctica, Ancient Egypt, habitats, the Great Fire of London etc.
4. Make a list of the everyday things you could do with the objects in your room. For instance, if you see a 'chair' you could write 'sit'.
5. List all of the jobs you can think of – anything people spend most of their time doing.
6. Pick a theme: animals, countries, food, vegetables, for example, and challenge another player to list as many things as possible belonging to that category in one minute. Alternatively, use the categories to come up with a word starting with each letter of the alphabet.
7. Make a list of places you have been or would like to go.
8. Create a list of shops you've been to, or modes of transport you've used. You could use other categories for this game instead: beaches, countries, counties, campsites or parks. The important thing is that you've been there or experienced whatever it is.
9. List all of the places you would go to if money were no object and you could travel through space or through time.
10. Make a list of different kinds of ephemera you have in your house. These are everyday things that people usually throw away or ignore: bus tickets, receipts, take away menus etc.

Finding / creating pictures

Use any of these ideas to create collections of pictures.

11. Gather together as many photos as you can or grab a notebook and go around your house noting down the different kinds of photos on display. Write captions for the photos.

12. Find postcards or look at postcards online with the help of an adult. (Parents: there are a lot of these on the Postcards from the Past Twitter feed: <https://twitter.com/PastPostcard>) Write down what might be on the back of one of these postcards.
13. Pick a theme. Go through magazines and find images on that theme or get an adult's help to create a collection of images using Evernote or similar. Write captions for the pictures.
14. Find a photo that is older than you. Now find one that takes you back even further if you can. For example, I have a photo of my Grannie from 1920. How far can you go back? Add several old photos to your collection. Write about what you've discovered or what the people in the photos are thinking.
15. Ask your grown up to show you three pictures that are important to him / her. Write down what you discover. (You could turn this into an interview with the student writer as the 'journalist' and the grown up as the 'interviewee'.)
16. Imagine you are going to take before and after photos. Before and after you build your dream house. Before and after you travel to your dream destination. Before and after you win a trophy / competition. (Or one of your own.) Draw and / or describe each photo.
17. Ask your grown up permission to take 3 photos in different rooms of your house. Describe each one.
18. Draw six boxes. Create pretend photos in each one. Call them: the garden, the football match, the concert, the weekend, the beach, the ice cream. (Or make up your own titles before you start.) Write captions.
19. Do you have photos of yourself at different ages? Or could you draw three pictures of yourself at different ages? Write down words that describe each picture.
20. Find pictures of different modes of transport, or draw them, or look at them in a book or online, with your grown up. Write down words that describe each picture.

Connecting ideas

Now you look at what you wrote in response to any of the above activities and connect them together. If you collected words verbally, then spend some time writing them down first.

21. Take any of the lists of words you created. Pair up the words to make interesting combinations. These don't have to make sense. For example, if you made a list of words about the beach and another about a rainforest you could pair up 'sand' and 'parrot' to make 'sand parrot' or 'spade' and 'tree' to make 'spade tree'.
22. Draw circles around your favourite words and turn them into sentences that contain all of the words. Repeat this until you have several interesting sentences.
23. Underline the words that you would like to include in a story (or get someone else to pick some for you). Write a 500 – 750 word story that includes these words and create some illustrations to go with it.
24. Pick two or three of the images of people that you found and imagine a scene where they meet. Write down the conversation they have.
25. Circle some of the captions or descriptions you wrote for the photos and images you found and include them in a story. Or write a poem about the postcards you found.

26. Mix and match. Circle any of the activities above (numbers 1 – 20) and combine the results. For added unpredictability, ask someone else to give you random numbers – combine the results of those activities.
27. Combine your favourite images and your favourite words from activities 1 – 20, whichever activities you tried, and write a play with at least two characters. Find someone else to act it out with you.
28. Are there any word combinations (from activities 1 – 10) that fit any of the images or photos you found (activities 11 – 20)?
29. Imagine someone wrote a particular word combination on the back of one of the postcards or photographs you found. For instance, imagine 'sand parrot' and 'spade tree' turned up on a postcard at your house. Could it be code? Or a clue to something? Write a story about it.
30. Imagine one of the lists of words you wrote turned up on the back of a photograph. Write a list poem about the photo. A list poem is simply a poem written as a list or involving a list. You can see some examples of list poems here: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poeticforms/list-poem> (For teenagers, Maura Dooley has written a list poem called 'What Every Woman Should Carry' – you can find it online. It's included in a well-known poetry anthology produced by Bloodaxe Books called 'Staying Alive'. The poem refers to adult themes.)

Create a poem

Use any of the above activities to provide source materials for your poem. For example, if you created a list of words about the beach, you could use those words to create a poem about the beach. If you created some pretend 'before and after photos', you could write a poem called 'before and after.'

31. Take one of the categories or topics you've used for source material so far and use it as the title of a poem. Before you start, make a list of rhyming words (you can find rhyming dictionaries online). Include as many rhymes as possible. Can you edit your poem so it has a certain number of beats (syllables) per line, 8 or 10, for example? 'Oh Dear' by Michael Rosen has very distinct rhythm and rhyme:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdDWvgX4q0I>
32. Write a poem using some of the words you paired together earlier. (Do activity 21 first.) Describe something ordinary as if it was strange. Don't include any rhymes at all this time. Again, try to include a certain number of beats per line. Decide this number in advance. Tap or clap the rhythm first if it helps.
33. Create a shape using some of the words you have collected so far (known as a concrete poem). For example, write in the shape of a snail or a house or a tree. It helps to sketch the shape in pencil first. You can see an example of a concrete poem if you google 'Brian Bilston Christmas Tree'. The poem is called 'Word Needles'.
34. Write a poem that uses sounds in interesting ways. For instance, there are parts of this silly poem by A.F. Harrold that sound like a digeridoo, other parts sound like a tongue twister! 'I Want to Be a Wallaby' by A.F. Harrold
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyA8_xMu7Vg
35. Try a poetic form. (You can look these up online here for example: <https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/children/2019/oct/different-types-of-poetry-for-kids.html>) Try writing a Haiku or a sonnet using the source material you've created already. For older children, here's a famous example of a villanelle by

Elizabeth Bishop. They're notoriously hard to write.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQdFjolzSvw>

Create a character

You can use any of the source material you generated in activities 1 – 20 for these exercises.

36. Build a person using some of the lists of words you've written down. For example, imagine someone who lives on a beach, or who works with animals, or who can travel through time. Write about them.
37. Build a person using a combination of some of the photographs and images you've found. For example, who might have written on the postcard you found? Write about them.
38. Take another look at some of the best pictures you found. Now decide (in your imagination) who took or drew the picture. What are this person's likes and dislikes? Where does he or she live and work? Write about them.
39. Based on the characters you've created so far, make two of them talk to each other. Create a dialogue.
40. If you haven't created a list of different jobs yet, create one now. Pick two of these jobs and imagine someone who might do each of these jobs. What are they like? Now imagine they really want to be: an explorer, a tight-rope walker, an ambulance driver, a statistician, the Prime Minister (or any job of your choice). Write about it.

Create a story

Using any character or characters you have already created, and any of the source material you've gathered, do the following activities in order to write a short story.

41. Make a list of possible problems a person could have. These could be big or small. For example, the tap won't stop dripping, a rocket had just landed in their garden, the cat has got muddy paws all over their homework.
42. Circle one of these problems and make some notes on it. Why has this happened? What can he or she do about it? Who might help?
43. What will happen at the end of the story? Make some notes based on the problem. Will it get solved? Will they find a solution?
44. How will the problem get worse during the story? For example, the tap won't stop dripping, then the drip turns into a gush. The rocket lands in the garden, then miniature aliens emerge and start eating Grandpa's tomatoes, the cat has walked over the main character's homework and then his or her pet parrot flew off with it in its beak. Now: how does it get EVEN WORSE? The sink starts to overflow, the aliens take over the main character's house, the parrot has made a nest out of the homework at the top of a tall tree.
45. Draw the beginning, middle and end of the story. (Use stick figures if you want to.) This is known as 'storyboarding'. It's not an essential step, but it helps you to plan and work out what will happen at each stage.
46. Using the preparation you've done so far, write a first draft of your story. Type it up if you can.
47. If you can, print and annotate (write on) your story to make it even better.
48. Proof read your story and make corrections to grammar, punctuation and spelling.
49. Type up or write out a final version of your story. Illustrate it if you would like to.

50. Read your story out loud to your grown up, or to an audience.

Creative Writing activities suitable for younger children (out loud or written down):

1. List the objects you can see in the space you are in or outside your window.
2. Play 'word association' with a grown up and write down any interesting words that come up.
3. Make a list of nature words. Or invent your own categories: ocean words, beach words, rainforest words, music words, for example.
4. Make a list of the everyday things you could do with the objects in your room.
5. Make a list of the jobs people do.
6. Pick a theme: animals, countries, food, vegetables (etc.) and challenge another player to list as many things as possible belonging to that category in a set time. Or play 'My grandma went shopping and she bought' – take it in turns to say what she bought (and, if you like, make the list alphabetical).
7. Make a list of places you have been or would like to go. Write a story about it.
8. Look at (or revise) all the lists of words you've made. Draw circles around your favourite words and turn them into sentences.
9. Ask your grown up to show you three pictures that are important to him / her. Write down what you discover.
10. Write your own version of 'Oh Dear' by Michael Rosen:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdDWvgX4q0I>