**Four “take aways” on low-stakes writing:**

1. Automaticity (the point at which extensive practice renders an action “automatic”) actually creates room in the working memory for deeper critical thinking, problem solving, comprehension, and creativity (Martinez).
2. Automaticity in writing (fluency) is developed by extensive practice (Martinez, Bartholomae & Elbow, Elbow, Crick).
3. Students need both high and low-stakes practice for fluency to develop (Crick, Elbow).
4. Extensive low-stakes practice (freewriting) provides a platform for reflective practices in the classroom (Elbow, Crick).

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**Models found in Use:**

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<tr>
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| **How:** Students should be told to write freely for a time period focusing on filling the time with the action of writing. If they come against a block, they should just write through it. | **How:** Provide a prompt that leads students to reflect about a topic relevant to a unit theme, skill, or reading selection. Allow students to write freely about that prompt. | **How:** Students may have both types of extensive writing. The true freewriting could provide a framework for delving more deeply into guided reflections about content. | **How:** Students respond to teacher-generated prompts in a notebook on one page, and a page is left empty for a teacher to respond next to the student’s response. 
*Alternative: peer partners* |
| **Nuts and Bolts:** •Students could do this for the first bit of class as they arrive as a standing assignment. •In a freewriting notebook, students could fill a certain number of pages by deadlines during the semester. | **Nuts and Bolts:** •Prompts in writing class generally focus on process. In reading-heavy classes they may focus on reading strategies, responding, or connecting texts. •Provide the prompts in class, for homework, or on Canvas. | **Nuts and Bolts:** •Students complete freewriting practice as a personal discipline throughout the semester with check-in dates. This can be done in a personal notebook. •Prompts are given for specific reflection at various learning moments throughout the semester. | **Nuts and Bolts:** •This is a common Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) practice. It is based on achieving authentic communication rather than fluency. •Teachers respond to the students authentically and in a way that expects further student engagement. |
| **Grading:** Completion - this is private writing that the student can personally reflect on, but the teacher will not comment or grade based on criteria. | **Grading:** Completion, but the teacher may comment on the reflections so as to provide a positive response to realizations about process or strategies during reflection. | **Grading:** This model lends well to setting up a reflective practice, so these can be graded for completion, but also may be used as the basis of a portfolio piece or other reflective assignment. | **Grading:** Because the focus is authentic communication, the grade is only completion. |

**What do students get out of it?**

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<td>They gain a habit of practice that focuses on fluency and a sense of authentic “voice.”</td>
<td>They develop a habit of reflection on learning, reading selections, process writing, etc...</td>
<td>They gain extensive practice that may develop voice and a space to reflect on process and development as a writer.</td>
<td>They come away with an increased awareness of audience (and relationship). They may gain some fluency from the extensive practice.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
References


This is Elbow commenting on the value of true freewriting space - it can be argued that true freewriting allows the working memory more space:


This is Crick explaining the connection of Dewey’s push toward learner autonomy and a striving for “Becoming.” Crick critiques some of Bartholomae’s criticism of true Freewriting by reminding the reader that if students experience joy in writing, that will lead to “Becoming” more than learning to argue against dominant discourses.


This is Elbow presenting the difference between the focus of low-stakes writing being about the process of creating different patterns in the brain rather than assessing content.

(In the Wordpress references section)


This is Martinez explaining strain on working memory and how automaticity can create room in the working memory. This seems to be particularly relevant to ESL students because of the strain that thinking of the right word or grammar point could place on the working memory while writing a high-stakes paper. It seems that freewriting as a regular practice could help ESL students develop personal strategies for automaticity that would create space in the working memory for more critical thinking, problem-solving, and analysis.