Common Informal Writing Activities
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Freewriting. In true freewriting, students write without a defined focus or prompt for a set number of minutes (usually 5-10), in order to ground themselves at the start of class or wrap up before transitioning to a new activity.

Focused Freewriting. Far more common is focused freewriting, in which students are given a specific objective to complete; the nature of these prompts is virtually limitless, but here are some examples, clustered around some common purposes:

- **To review or summarize** (e.g., "Summarize the main idea of the reading for today," "Define the three terms I've written on the board in your own words")
- **To ground discussion** (e.g., "Describe something that confused you in the reading for today," "Identify the most convincing evidence the writer uses to support their claim in this article")
- **To practice disciplinary skills** (e.g., "What do you think the central threat to this firm is?," "Write a few sentences to synthesize this fiscal data")
- **To generate ideas** (e.g., "List as many potential applications of this concept as you can," "Brainstorm responses the management team could have to this problem")
- **To prepare for next steps** (e.g., "Name one thing from today's class you should review before the exam," "Document two takeaways that could apply to your upcoming papers")

Index Card Temperature Taking. Distributing an index card to each student and collecting them is a simple way to assess learning in progress, particularly in large classes. For instance, you might prompt students to write a single question they have at the close of a lecture. A quick flip through the cards then offers a broad assessment of the class.

Thesis Statement Drafting. In just a few minutes, students can practice generating and articulating an argument. Ask them to respond to a reading, or make a recommendation based on a case presented in class.

The One-Minute Paper. Although called a "one-minute" paper, this exercise usually takes more like 3-5 minutes. In it, students summarize the day's most important content, and often conclude with a question they're still wondering about or remain a bit confused by. These texts can be used not only to reinforce learning, but also, if collected, to assess it and plan for any review needed in the next class.

Coding and Seeking. Students can be directed to purposefully extract salient material from a text with coding and seeking activities. For example, you might ask them to highlight all the debatable claims, the evidence, or the applications of a course concept in either a course reading or another student's writing.

Dialogic Reading Journals. When students need support in digesting complex material, a dialogic journal can help them read closely. In two columns, ask them to first cite specific passages from the text, and then jot a brief response to that material—for instance, by restating, interpreting, questioning, or affirming it.

Online Posts. Online posts can happen on Blackboard or a course blog. Typically no more than a paragraph, they enable students to continue discussion outside of class, respond to one another's writing, and archive work in progress.