

EVERYBODY WRITES

OVERVIEW

Everybody Writes means preparing your students to engage rigorously in classroom discussions by giving them the chance to reflect first in writing. *Everybody Writes* can start in the early grades with simple prompts and stems and short bits of writing—words, phrases, or sentences.

WHERE AM I NOW?

| | | Proficiency | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| | | I am brand new to <i>Everybody Writes</i> ... | I'm in the planning and practice stage, though I haven't tried <i>Everybody Writes</i> yet in class ... | I'm beginning to try <i>Everybody Writes</i> in my classroom ... | I use <i>Everybody Writes</i> regularly ... |
| Comfort & Confidence | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ... and excited to try it. | <input type="checkbox"/> ... but know with more practice I'll make it work. | <input type="checkbox"/> ... and love how it basically works. | <input type="checkbox"/> ... and am adding my own distinctive touch. | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> ... and undecided about my ability to pull it off. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ... because I still have questions about how to do it right. | <input type="checkbox"/> ... with mixed results I need to evaluate. | <input type="checkbox"/> ... but I may be overusing it. | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ... and not at all sure it's for me. | <input type="checkbox"/> ... because, frankly, I still have serious doubts. | <input type="checkbox"/> ... but it doesn't seem to work or suit me. | <input type="checkbox"/> ... but when class isn't going well, I do it poorly and it doesn't help. | |

Work from your strengths. If you find yourself in the bottom left portion, leaf through this technique to locate related ones you might prefer to work on right now.

EXPAND YOUR SKILLS AND REPERTOIRE

Why *Everybody Writes*?

Here are seven of the many virtues of *Everybody Writes*:

1. *Allows a focused starting point for discussion.* *Everybody Writes* allows you to select effective responses with which to begin your discussion because you can review your students' ideas in advance by *Circulating* and reading over shoulders.

15 CIRCULATE
21 TAKE A STAND

22 COLD CALL

2. *Makes you Cold Call ready.* *Everybody Writes* allows you to *Cold Call* students simply and naturally because you know everyone is prepared with thoughts, and you can start merely by asking, "What did you write about, Brittany?"

19 AT BATS

3. *Enables "Version 2.0."* *Everybody Writes* allows students to refine and improve their thinking before it becomes public. This helps them engage intellectually and improves the quality of their ideas and writing. It also gives them *At Bats* at a skill fundamental to all of their future educational and professional work.

4. *Supplies direction.* The question or prompt you choose steers students right away into thinking that will help to shape meaningful discussion.

"Argue the point of view of someone you don't agree with ..."

"Write a sentence defining the vocabulary word *imperceptible* that makes it clear that *imperceptible* is different from *invisible*."

"Choose one of these: *What do the Capulets think of the Montagues?* Or *What do the Montagues think of the Capulets?*"

5. *Upgrades students' memory.* People remember twice as much of what they write as they remember of what they say or hear. Students remember twice as much of what they are learning if they write it down.

17 RATIO

6. *Gets everybody to answer.* *Everybody Writes* raises the *Ratio* because everybody answers, not just those who get called on. It also demands more of students who, in response to an oral question, tend to raise their hands sheerly out of a vague impulse to try to answer.

7. *Connects to notes and evidence.* Writing *before* discussion can get students in the habit of sourcing evidence by consulting the text or their notes.

6 BEGIN WITH THE END

15 CIRCULATE

18 CFU

21 TAKE A STAND

22 COLD CALL

Choose three of the seven virtues whose value grabs you most strongly. For each, give your best concrete example of how adding *Everybody Writes* would benefit a specific class activity you've been thinking about in pursuit of a major lesson objective. (You may find ideas in *Circulate*, *Check for Understanding*, *Take a Stand*, and *Cold Call*.)

1. Giving a chance to formulate their thoughts before being called on
- cold call / At bats
2. Answers can be used for Quiz credits or other assignments
- Ratio
3. Students are more prepared + Hopefully less nervous while having their answer written - Ratio

Making It Work

We just mentioned numerous benefits of *Everybody Writes*. To gain those benefits, keep the following four points in mind:

1. *Keep it tight*. Allow students time to reflect but maintain urgency and manage the clock.
2. *Make the question matter*. Whether your prompt is broad or specific, be sure that it gets students thinking in a direction that prepares them to take a vital, high-*Ratio* part in the discussion that will follow. Write it in advance. Err on the side of clarity. 17 RATIO
3. *Set expectations*. Do you want students to write in complete sentences or with attention to other various aspects of grammar, syntax, and spelling? Might you ask students to read aloud what they just wrote? Does the writing need to be neat enough for you, the teacher, to read? Will or might you collect it?
4. *Build the habit of writing*. Request it frequently. As students do more writing, the task becomes easier for them, the quality of expression and thought go up, and the cost in time goes down. Give students a designated place to write (in their packet, in a journal, in their notes with guidelines) to underscore the importance of their writing and to integrate it into their overall process of accumulating learning. 31 BINDER CONTROL

Ways to Initiate *Everybody Writes*

The following are various ways and means of launching an *Everybody Writes*. In the empty left column, check any idea you haven't or have rarely tried but that could be appropriate to your classroom. In the empty right column, note a discussion activity that could follow from the work done in that *Everybody Writes* activity. For example, an excellent brief bit of student writing on a formatted "reflections" page in one class session could become the basis for some *Do Now* writing for the entire class at the outset of the next session.

| | Writing ... | Possible Activity |
|---|--|--|
| ✓ | ... on a formatted "reflections" page that is sometimes turned in at the end of class | Anonymous thought processing. |
| ✓ | ... on "a piece of scratch paper" | Gives unprepared students an even playing ground |
| ✓ | ... in response to teacher-generated questions written on the board or overhead | helps students not feel singled out. |
| ✓ | ... in response to student-generated, teacher-vetted questions | Non-verbal agreement to questions |
| ✓ | ... in response to a question framed verbally by the teacher at the moment it's assigned | Non-singel opinions |
| ✓ | ... a "free write" in response to something the teacher just read aloud | Thought processing |

| | Writing ... | Possible Activity |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| ✓ | ... a "free write" in response to something students just read " | Thought processing |
| ✓ | ... in response to one question | " |
| | ... in response to a series of three or four questions | Chance to formatting |
| | ... about a question the student has selected from several choices | |
| | ... in a "Response Journal" that the teacher rarely sees | |
| | ... on sticky notes to paste into the book the student is reading | |
| | ... for twenty seconds until the timer goes off | |
| ✓ | ... "until I give you the signal to stop" | Rapid answer / w/ no time |
| ✓ | ... for three to five minutes | Rapid answer w/ time |
| | ... in complete sentences | |
| | ... with no format expectations | |
| | ... to express one's opinion on a matter | |
| | ... to describe the opinion of someone else | |
| | ... to assemble evidence to support one of two contrasting opinions | |
| | ... in a portion of a packet for which students will be graded | |
| | ... | |

PRACTICE WITH STUDY GROUP OR PARTNERS

Revisit "Why Everybody Writes?"

1. Share your thoughts from "Why Everybody Writes?"
2. When someone shares an interesting idea, say aloud, "I'll steal that!" and explain how.

Your takeaways:

Everybody Writes is a great technique for students, those who cannot formulate answers publicly or those who need to compose their thoughts properly

Ways to Initiate and Maintain

1. Poll the group to find out how many of you checked each idea in "Ways to Initiate *Everybody Writes*."
2. Discuss several that many of you chose.
 - What value do you see in that idea?
 - What challenges might stand in the way of making it a good path into discussion?
3. Ask the same questions about several that few of you chose.
4. What ways have you already tried, and how did they go?
5. Brainstorm other ways to initiate *Everybody Writes*.
6. Considering your students in particular, what are some things that could go poorly if you used *Everybody Writes*? How could you protect against them?
7. What routines and systems could you put into place to make your *Everybody Writes* more efficient, focused, reflective, and rich?

TRY EVERYBODY WRITES IN THE CLASSROOM

1. For a lesson plan in the offing, write an *Everybody Writes* prompt that you want to use to launch a class discussion related to the lesson objective.

6 BEGIN WITH THE END

2. Write the outcomes you would like to see and hear (in the written responses and in the class discussion). Check the question again with *nonneutral prompts* in mind. Consider how this writing might also relate to something students have already learned.

3. Plan the logistics of when and how you will incorporate this into your lesson as well as how long the writing and discussion should take. Keep it tight.

4. Write down what you will say to the students before they begin their task, to clarify your expectation of what they are to do, including where they are to write, the format, and anything else.

5. Anticipate what you will be doing while they write.

6. Anticipate how students will share their responses (for example, read them aloud, share with a partner, turn in to you).

7. Consider having students discuss this latest experience with the process of *Everybody Writes*.

8. Evaluate the process after class.

TROUBLE-SHOOT

Steady On

Don't conflate *Everybody Writes* with "free writing." *Everybody Writes* has a clear question and prepares students for discussion.

Other Challenges

| Possible Challenge | Possible Solutions |
|--|--|
| The students are unable (or unwilling) to sustain writing for the full period I allow. | Did the nonneutral prompt set the students in a clear enough direction? Should the format you require be simpler, quicker to execute? Have students practice writing so that they develop greater stamina for it. Prime the pump: very quickly ask three students what they're going to write about to help generate ideas. Then write. |
| Unable to come up with proper answers during writing mints | was the topic broad/clear enough? Was there enough time? |

BE CREATIVE

21 TAKE A STAND

1. Use *Everybody Writes* as a form of *Take a Stand*.
2. For very young students, consider combining the writing with drawing.

SUSTAIN YOUR PROGRESS

1. Using feedback from your study group or other peers, and reviewing your own lesson notes and observations, monitor your progress on *Everybody Writes*.

| Date | A New Use or Style of <i>Everybody Writes</i> | What Worked, What Didn't | What Next? |
|------|---|--------------------------|------------|
| | N/A | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

2. Revisit "Where Am I Now?" Are you ready to build out to some other new technique?