Everything to Know About Your Writers.com Course

From the Writers.com Team

Contact us anytime at writers@writers.com

Dear Writer,

Thank you for enrolling in one of our creative writing courses! Whether this is your first course with Writers.com or your fiftieth, we hope it supports and nourishes your writing journey, and we hope it's a ton of fun.

As a member of Writers.com, you gain exclusive access to our community resources and Facebook groups. If you haven't yet, make sure you collect on the following perks of the Writers.com community:

- Download our free ebooks and resources here. (The page is password-protected; enter password **writeon**)
- Join the Writers.com Community Group on Facebook here.
- Join our alumni-only private Facebook groups:
    - Writers.com Fiction Group
    - Writers.com Creative Nonfiction Group
    - Writers.com Poetry Group
- If you haven't yet, subscribe to our free weekly newsletter, with free writing tips, community news, and more.

To get the most out of your upcoming course, take a look at the information we've included in this packet. Here, you can find information regarding how our courses work, how to best participate in weekly workshopping, and what to do when you have questions.

Welcome to our creative writing community. We're happy to have you here!

Warmly,
The Writers.com Team

How Our Courses Work

Course Format and Platform

We hold our courses on an online learning platform called PowerSchool Learning. (There are a few exceptions, which are noted in the course descriptions.) **PowerSchool is text-based, so there are no specified meeting times within a course.** You'll access the entire course within PowerSchool, including:

- Reading lectures
- Starting or joining discussions
- Submitting assignments each week
- Commenting on other students' work
- Receiving direct weekly feedback on your work from the instructor

A regular laptop is all the equipment you'll need. You won't need to be online at a particular time or day. In general, you should plan to check in with the course at least a few times each week.

You can find more information on our "How Our Courses Work" page at writers.com/how-our-courses-work.

How to Access Your Course

The night before the course begins (late at night US time), we will email you the instructions for accessing the course in PowerSchool. On the morning of course start, check your inbox for an invite email. **If you don't see your invite email on the morning of course start, check your spam folder, in case our email was sent there accidentally.**

Even if you have taken a course in PowerSchool before, be sure to follow the link instructions we include in the invite email. **You will need to follow a specific link in the invite (a link ending in five letters, like LJXCF) to be added to the current course.** If you log into PowerSchool without first following this link, you will get a message saying you have "no active courses."

Once the course opens, you will be able to introduce yourself and meet your fellow classmates.

How Zoom Courses Work

Some of our courses offer a live video component. If you're not sure whether your course has a video component, check the course description on our website.

All of our live courses are hosted through Zoom. After you have accessed the course in PowerSchool, the instructor will upload instructions for accessing the course, as well as the date and time.

Some instructors may wait until the course begins to set a date and time, as they want to be sure the Zoom calls work with everyone's schedule. Otherwise, the instructor will list this information in the course description.

Treat Zoom calls like you would any other class. Come prepared to discuss the readings and your own work, and try to participate in every conversation about the work. Most of all, have fun with the video calls. After all, you're building community with writers from thousands of miles away. How cool is that?

Supporting a Diverse Community

When we write, we write from the heart. For many of us, that writing traverses the details of our identities and personal experiences. Because of this, the staff and instructors at Writers.com are committed to supporting a community of diverse ideas and identities. Write your truth, regardless of your age, race, creed, sexuality, gender identity, nationality, educational background, income, political, religious, and social views, physical and mental health or disability, or criminal history; and please extend the same spirit of respect and welcome to all other Writers.com community members.

What does an inclusive writing community look like? For us, it means empathetic instruction, discussion, and feedback. We encourage students and instructors to work to understand one other's lives and viewpoints, and to communicate their own perspectives constructively and productively.

It means acknowledging that the writing process is vulnerable, and fostering environments where we can feel safe in that vulnerability. We take this responsibility seriously, so if you have any suggestions or feedback—and especially if you are feeling or believe another participant is feeling unwelcome—please don't hesitate to contact us.

The best writing community challenges the way we approach the written word, while also creating a safe space to grow as writers. Come as you are—all are welcome!

Your Instructor

We select instructors who have extensive experience in the literary world, as well as a commitment to our values of welcoming and supporting writers of all stripes.

Work with our instructors like you would any other teacher, but also remember that they are creative writers who share the same passion as you. You can always ask instructors for the following:

- Clarity on a piece of feedback they offer.
- Relevant, recommended readings.
- Help submitting your writing to a journal or press.
- Advice for navigating the world of writing.

Lastly, use this opportunity to network with your instructor. Our instructors bring extensive experience to their field, often including postgraduate degrees and a long publication record, and they are *all* delighted to help you make your way as a writer. **Whatever you want to know, ask!**

How to Get the Most Out of Your Course

The Workshopping Process

Every week, you and your classmates will upload your work to that week's writing assignment. It is important that you not only upload your work, but also **share thoughtful feedback responses** to the other students.

Engaging with your fellow students' work will greatly benefit not only their writing, but your own, because you are also training yourself to think critically about what works and doesn't work in your writing genre. The result is a community of writers that grows alongside each other, fostering the skills and relationships that will sustain your writing journey.

Just like the act of writing itself, giving and receiving writing feedback are both skills that are fostered over time. Below are some helpful tips to make the most of your participation in the course. These tips can help equally in working with the feedback you receive from your instructor and in your weekly workshopping with fellow students.

Suggestions for Creative Writing Workshopping

When they're done well, creative writing workshops are intimate, productive, and a lot of fun. The following are tried-and-true guidelines for getting the most out of a writing workshop:

1. **Give as much as you receive.** Workshops are successful when everyone gives and gets great feedback.
2. **Enjoy yourself.** Workshops are a unique space where everybody shares the same interests and goals as you, so have fun and connect with the community!

Offering Feedback

3. **Connect with the author's goals for the piece.** Try to understand what the writer's goals are for their piece before giving feedback, and share within that. Your feedback for "This is my first-ever poem and I'm just glad I got it finished" should look and feel very different from your feedback for "I'm submitting the opening chapter of what I hope will be a bestselling trilogy of mystery novels."
4. **Offer your feedback as a compliment sandwich.** Your feedback should both acknowledge what you feel is working in a piece and offer suggestions for improvement, and a sandwich shape works very well for this. Start with positive feedback, then share constructive suggestions, then close with more positive feedback.
5. **Make your feedback as specific as possible.** Try to quote specific lines or point to concrete places within the piece that are relevant to the feedback you're sharing. Try to avoid blanket statements that the writer may not know how to interpret or implement.

6. **Describe your experiences as a reader.** When giving feedback, you want to make sure the writer knows what it was like for *you* to read this piece. Describe your experiences as you read: "I can visualize this description very clearly," "I'm not sure who's speaking this line of dialogue," "I wanted to know more about ___," and so on.

Receiving Feedback

7. **Read others' feedback for you objectively.** The purpose of workshop is to understand how other readers understand and perceive the particular piece of writing you're sharing—not you overall as a writer or a person. Try not to take feedback too personally.
8. **Ask clarifying questions.** When someone gives a piece of feedback you don't understand, you should absolutely ask for more specificity.
9. **"Try on" the feedback you receive.** Knowing how other readers encountered your work is extremely helpful. Try to seek the work through their eyes, and "try on" their feedback as it would apply to revising your piece. How does it feel? What directions does it unlock? The final job of revising is up to you, so try on the feedback you receive, and keep what you can use.
10. **There's no need to dispute or "correct" the feedback you receive.** A reader's honest experience reading your work is simply that. Resist the impulse to defend or over-explain your work, or to argue with or correct another writer's feedback. (An exception is if feedback is making you or another student feel unwelcome or unsafe; in that case, please alert the instructor or Writers.com support.)

More to Know

What If the Course Isn't Working for Me?

Sometimes, a course simply isn't the right fit. If this is the case for you (or if you are unable to continue with the course due to changing life circumstances), have a look at our refund policy, below.

If there's something specific we can do to improve a course, or if you feel the course isn't delivering the benefit you enrolled for, please let us know at writers@writers.com. We want to hear this whether you decide to stay in or withdraw from the course, and whether you feel the issue lies with the course material, the instructor, the other students, the course platform, or anything else.

Refund Policy

We understand that life circumstances and writing priorities change, and we have a flexible refund and course credit policy. We offer the following refund policy to all Writers.com students:

Before or during the first week of class: If you withdraw from a course before it begins, or during the first week of the course, we will offer your choice of either a full refund of 100% of your course fee, or equivalent Writers.com course credit.

During the second week of class: Beginning on the first day of the second week of the course (usually a Wednesday), we will offer you either a prorated refund or prorated course credit. For example, if you enroll in a 10-week course and withdraw during the second week, you can choose from either a refund of 90% of the course fee, or that amount as credit for a future course, whichever you prefer.

During or after the third week of class: Beginning on the first day of the third week of the course and thereafter, we will only offer prorated course credit (not refunds). This reflects the importance of the writing communities that develop during our courses, which late withdrawals can disrupt.

What If I Find Myself in Conflict with Another Course Participant?

In all of our courses, we encourage both instructors and students to create a positive and welcoming learning community. **Conflicts are very rare in Writers.com courses.**

Still, they do sometimes happen, and when they do, we want to know right away, to be able to support you and the other course participants. **If you or another course participant are feeling unsafe, unwelcome, or belittled, including in interactions with the instructor, please contact us right away** at writers@writers.com. We will work with all parties to understand and address the conflict.

If the conflict is with another student, you may ask the instructor for suggestions, contact us, or both. If the conflict is with the instructor, and addressing it with him or her directly doesn't seem possible or desirable, please contact us.

Again, these situations are uncommon, and we work with them case-by-case; our priority will be to make sure that the course is a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for all participants.

How Do I Know I'm Good Enough/Ready for the Course?

Here's the short answer: **You are good enough, because you have your own experiences, writing practice, and goals as a writer.**

Self-doubt can be a natural experience in a writing course, especially if other people are going to view and respond to your work. While we can't take that doubt away from you completely, we can at least offer a different perspective.

First, much of what makes a writing workshop valuable is that the participants come from different backgrounds, stories, and life experiences. You are a great addition to the course because of your unique perspective and your willingness to participate fully.

Second, remember that the instructor is there to help you, and to ensure that all workshop participants approach the workshop with kindness and empathy. As we mentioned above, if someone makes you feel belittled or unwelcome, let us or the instructor know. (And if the instructor makes you feel this way, let us know right away.)

Third, focus on your goals within the workshop. If you're looking to grow as a writer and gain new perspectives on writing, then you should work toward those things, and you're in exactly the right place. The only writer to compare yourself to is the writer you were yesterday!

Finally, it's important to realize that all writing is valuable. "Good" writing or "bad" writing, Nobel Prize or Ig Nobel Prize, your writing matters because it has something to say. Moreover, all writing can be improved, and your value as a writer doesn't lie in the first draft.

What If Someone Steals or Plagiarizes My Work?

In over 20 years and hundreds of workshops, we've never had an issue where a student stole another's work in a Writers.com course. However, it's still a valid concern, and you should know your options.

The best way to deal with plagiarism is to keep detailed records of your writing. If you keep a journal, make a habit of writing the date next to your writing, or upload your writing to your computer, which will keep the date for you. Additionally, be sure to save all of the work you upload into your Writers.com course, so that you have a record of your submissions and the dates.

By keeping these records, you can protect yourself against anyone who tries to steal your work in the future. If someone does try to steal your work in a Writers.com course, these records will ensure that the plagiarized work is unpublished, and that the plagiarizer is permanently removed from our community. We've got your back!

After the Course Ends…

Course Survey

After the course ends, we will send you a survey about your experiences in the course and with the instructor. **Hearing your feedback in this course survey is hugely helpful for us:** we use it to improve our courses and the overall Writers.com experience.

If you've had a great time in the course, this survey is where we collect student testimonials to display on our instructors' pages on Writers.com, and to share on our social media, so please don't hold back!

If you've had a less-than-positive experience in the course, we may reach out if your feedback prompts any concern from us, to see what we can do to help.

In either case, please answer this survey with your honest feedback. We look forward to reading your thoughts!

Saving Your Work

Once the course ends, there will be a two-week window for you to go back into the course, re-read the discussions, and see your submissions. **After this window, the course will close. Be sure to save all of your work onto your personal computer,** as this work may not be recoverable after the course closes.

Keeping In Touch

We love to hear from our Writers.com alumni! As a course participant, you can join our alumni groups on Facebook:

- Writers.com [Fiction Group](#)
- Writers.com [Creative Nonfiction Group](#)
- Writers.com [Poetry Group](#)

Use these spaces for further inspiration, discussion, and community-building, and **please share with us any writing milestones or successes** you're proud of, as well—we love to profile students' work on the Writers.com [Community page](#), so please avail yourself of the free publicity!

In Closing

Writers.com is the oldest writing school on the internet. We started offering writing workshops in 1996, delivering collegiate-level instruction at a fraction of the cost.

Today, we boast 75+ courses from 20+ instructors, reaching thousands of students from around the world each year. We're honored to have you join our writing community, and we're excited for you to become a Writers.com alumnus.

Feel free to email us anytime at writers@writers.com. We are always working to accommodate your needs, listen to your ideas, and hear about your writing successes.

We hope you enjoy your experience in our class. Happy Writing!

Best,
The Writers.com Team