

# THINKING OUTSIDE THE BLOCKS

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***10 WRITING PROMPTS  
TO TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF  
AND MAKE WRITING FUN!***

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# HEY THERE

*Congratulations on taking this important step towards improving your writing and saying goodbye to writer's block. If you're here, that means you're ready to do what it takes to become the prolific songwriter you're meant to be, and we think you're amazing for that!*



*Allie & Bess*

*We often get stuck when we put too much pressure on writing a great song. The truth is, not every song you write will be great. And that's OK! Even your favorite songwriters write mediocre or downright bad songs. We promise.*

*The important thing is that you just keep writing. The more you write, the better your chances will be of actually tapping into those great songs. But the longer you wait to write, the more pressure you put on the results – and you get stuck in a negative feedback loop.*

# QUICK

## Quick Tips from Allie & Bess

**Write frequently:** If you only write when “inspiration strikes,” you’ll be setting yourself up for a lot of long dry spells. And then when you do feel inspired, you won’t have the hours of practice under your belt to always capture it. Write 3-4 times a week or daily for 10-30 minutes, even if you don’t get a song out of it. Consistency is a game changer.

**Write bad songs:** No, that’s not a joke. Of course, we all want to write great songs. But sometimes the pressure of wanting to write a great song can keep you from writing at all. Don’t worry about the results and just write. Remember, if you don’t like it, nobody has to ever hear it.

**Do new things that scare you:** We all get stuck in our comfort zones from time to time. Stepping out can be scary, but it can push you and inspire you to write something you didn’t even know you had in you. You can learn some new chords on the guitar, pick up a new instrument, make a beat using a drum machine app, or write a poem and then set it to music. Whatever feels new and scary: DO IT.

**Finish more, perfect less:** The short truth is that quantity leads to quality. Repetition builds muscle memory, and we learn from our mistakes. Yes, editing is important, but the knowledge and experience you’ll gain from writing MANY songs will surpass what you would get from spending all your time editing ONE song.

**Find a friend to keep you accountable:** Have a goal of writing 2 songs a month? Find a friend you trust to hold you accountable for that goal and set a time to check in with them regularly. Maybe they have a creative or personal goal too that you can hold them accountable for. They shouldn’t judge you if you don’t accomplish your goal, but you’ll be less inclined to show up empty handed if you’re face to face with another person.

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PS

*“The only way to become a cook is to cook, and the road to becoming a good cook is paved not only with repetition but also with the intuition you gain along the way.”*

*-Julia Turshen,  
Small Victories*

*“I hereby grant you permission to write crap. The more the better. Remember, crap makes the best fertilizer.” -Pat Pattison*

**[REDACTED]**

*One of the best things you can do to  
get unstuck is to use a writing prompt and  
**make it a game!***

*Give yourself permission to write something silly,  
sloppy or completely outside of your wheelhouse.  
In fact, make it your goal to **FINISH** a song no  
matter how good or bad it is. No one needs to  
hear it except for you. The important thing is to  
get the gears turning so you can become  
unblocked.*

*Here are **10 writing prompts** that will inspire  
you and get you writing! We've seen amazing  
songs come out of these exercises, but more  
importantly, we've seen amazing writers blossom  
after they removed some of the pressure and just  
had fun!*

**[REDACTED]**

1. Write for an artist who is not in your genre. If you write folk music, write a song for an artist like Rihanna or Nick Jonas. If you write R&B, write an old-school country song a la Patsy Cline or Willie Nelson.

2. Find or make a simple beat. Write a bassline and then write your melody and lyrics over just drums and bass. If you don't have a bass, you can play the bassline on a keyboard, piano or even sing it!

3. Pick a book from your bookshelf and write a song based off of the book title. It doesn't have to be about the book itself; just use the title as a lyrical jumping off point. It can be the title of a new song or just a lyric within the song.

4. Listen to a podcast and write a song inspired by something that was said or by the general idea of the podcast. Podcasts we recommend for this are "This American Life," "The Moth" & "Love & Radio."

5. Take a word or phrase from a song you love and make it a title of a brand new song. Or take a title from a song you love and use it as a lyric within a new song.

6. Watch an episode of a TV show or a movie you haven't seen. Turn the sound off and score the movie. Use voice notes on your phone or any means you have to record. Just play and sing what comes to your mind as you watch the show, and go through it later to pick out any sections that you liked.

7. Pick a general topic you'd like to write about (e.g., hope, anxiety or love). Then choose an item that's related to that topic in some way (e.g., balloon, rollercoaster, loved one's sweater). Object write for 10-15 minutes about that item. Go back and underline a few key actions or phrases that interest you and use that as the seed of a new song.

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8. Write down 20 interesting nouns and then try to find combinations that intrigue you, have some conflict or evoke a story. If it helps, you can add conjunctions such as *the, and* or *when* or prepositions such as *of, but, to* or *on*. Use that phrase to spark a song lyric idea or use it as a title. For instance: silhouette, daydream, forest, waterfall, concrete, tornado, ancestor, suitcase, beginning, horizon. Possible combinations: Concrete Horizon, Daydream Silhouette, A Suitcase and Beginnings.

9. This is a longer one. Set aside 2 hours and aim to write 3 complete songs in that time. Don't worry about how good or bad the songs are. If you think it's a cheesy lyric, make it even cheesier and finish it. Shoot for quantity over quality. Have snacks ready!

10. Bess's 3-Degrees-of-Separation Verse Exercise.

-First, pick a verse from a song that you like. Write a new version of that verse copying the form, the rhyme scheme, the phrasing and possibly even the subject matter! But try not to repeat any exact words from the original version.

-Next, write a new version based on your "copy" of the original. Try changing up the phrasing, the rhyme scheme and the melody. Vary the lyrics and subject matter a little more so it starts to feel like your own creation.

-Lastly, try altering the chords, tempo, and/or feel so it's even more varied from the original.

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*We hope these exercises give you the kickstart you need to have fun writing and unlock some parts of your creativity that may have felt a little stuck. We've all been there, and we still feel stuck sometimes! But over the years, we have learned ways to keep pushing through those uninspired times and grow from them. Any creative endeavor has peaks and valleys, but don't be scared off by the valleys because that is where the land is most fertile. And remember, if you really want to improve your writing, the most important thing is to keep writing, keep writing, and then when you have nothing to write about, keep writing more. We believe in you!*

*All the best,*

*Allie & Bess*

