

ALCHEMY IN ACTION – HOW TO TURN SCRIBBLED NOTES INTO MASTERFUL PROSE



Gather around you the Ingredients:

- **Notebooks** – years of sparkling gems of ideas, garnered from the world.
- **Pictures** encrusted on every Noticeboard and Fridge in the house. Postcards from holidays. Children’s scribbles.
- **Objects** to stimulate the touch senses. **Smells** that provoke strong reactions
- Mountains of “How To” **Manuals** (*to prop up the desk*), and
- Dog-eared **Handouts** from distant but not forgotten Workshops.



Outline:

You are writing amazing prose generated from the prompts, life or through this Web Group and many others sources. You have been doing this for many months now as advocated by all the leading writing “experts” in their “How to Manuals”.

You are producing snapshots of writing that if only you could complete it would be of a quality that would be bound to win top prize in the most prestigious of competitions. The Sunday Telegraph would then contact you offering you a lifetime contract for articles, a launch pad to greater and better things, enabling you to reprise your excellence in prose *ad infinitum* (or *ad nauseum!*). Your voice is now ready to be heard by the world – but how do you develop it from the basic ingredients above?



Methodology:

1. First find your Voice - Take a Notebook at random and type up (or write) a segment, then another - you will notice that your writing has rhythm and you favour certain phrasing and words – these are the unconscious metre and timbre of **your VOICE**. Once you have identified your voice - use it to your benefit and consciously play to your strengths. This is your **WRITING VOICE**, your own and individual - which you need to nurture and be proud of. It is *Unique* to you. People who get published have one thing in common, they are *Unique*. Judges and editors are not looking for rehashes of familiar voices (even though they might be commercial – what they really want is something different, the “new next big thing”).
2. Take in hand these segments you have typed-up (or in my case re-written in longhand) - play with them, have fun. – Try cutting out the paragraphs and reposition them. Highlight words and poignant phrases and change their position in the sentences. Alter/change words by consulting a Thesaurus or a Poet’s Manual. Change the Point of View (1st person to 3rd or *vice versa*). Carefully preserve your VOICE but challenge your boundaries by reaching beyond your already known knowledge.
3. Read these fledgling pieces out - to your partner, the dog, the wallpaper or X-factor style down a hairbrush. **Perform** these pieces and **sell them** to an audience – your reader. A word of caution – only listen to kind

subjective criticism, even from yourself, (and in my case if the dog starts howling then I cut some of the long tortuous phrases that will bore my reader). Apply editing with care, using only comments your writing voice agrees with.

You will have discovered now that your words *sound* more rounded and professional, more importantly – they are *constructed by you and are you*.

5. The next step is to send them to your friend or post them to this Site...See how people respond to the words alone, without your performance behind them, lending weight and emphasis in all the right places. *Audition** the words to test that they stand alone. Again – be kind with yourself, and don't feel the need to defend them (they didn't kill the dog, or make the wallpaper fall of the wall did they?). They are your words and something you can be proud of.

Now you are an established Writer with an **identifiable Writing Voice**.

6. Pick your favourite piece and *develop it further* – do some timed-writing – say 10-15 minutes – just writing what comes into your mind and seeing where the direction of the piece is taking you. Enjoy the journey. Don't let your “inner critic” stop you, you can always delete the paragraphs or tear up the paper, nothing has to be perfect or with intent or is permanent, ***just get the words on the page***. This will offer you some framework to develop, it will be the skeleton on which to place the muscle of your fine prose.
7. The piece of writing will now have shown you its potential to fit into your life – an article, a piece of witty prose, a poem, or a letter to your family asking them to give you some space – *the end use or function does not matter* – it is **the piece of writing itself which counts**.
8. Finally, print it off or take photocopies, so it doesn't languish in a switched-off computer or the closed notebook on a dusty shelf. Out of sight is definitely out of mind. Place these in a purposefully purchased folder, with a cover you can personalise. Expose often to the light, nurture and read at leisure with pride.

Result:



By repeating this process over a few months you will build a portfolio, of “working pieces” that you can dip into and retrieve when you need that “something special” for a competition, article or poetry recital. Never will you miss out again, because you have “nothing to wear” and no time to write it.

The distance of time will put a different slant on the work, it will negate the stress of writer's block, and prevent your confidence being attacked by your inner critic.



You will have templates to work on, to enjoy polishing, refining and gently moulding to fit the purpose of the quest at hand, turning scribbled notes to masterful award-winning prose.