

Welcome.

We invite you to:

- Embrace creativity as a freedom, where you can feel inspired to explore and process ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions
- Commit to being you. Bring your life and your passions into your writing. Do you love K-Pop? Reptiles? Knitting? Write about those. The things you love, matter.
- Speak as yourself, not some idea of a Writer. “Be yourself, everybody else is taken!” (Oscar Wilde)
- Explore new genres, approaches, ways of writing and making (as well as not-writing and not-making).
- Share your ideas, collaborate and learn together. Give yourself space to grow, build confidence in writing and let this spread into other aspects of your life
- Treat writing as totally optional
- Commit to ideas which may seem 'weird' or 'unusual', see where they take you
- Encourage yourself and others to write *simply for the sake of it*
- Remember words are powerful. They can be harmful, as well as helpful. If you feel your writing is going somewhere you don't want it to, step away from that paper, papyrus, or phone and take a break. You don't have to keep writing. [excellent safety message](#)
- Notice if writing isn't making you feel better. There's no guarantee that it will. If you find it's bringing up things you don't like, remember to use the Signposts at the back of this booklet.
- Be judgement-free about what you've written. Or not written. Writing anything is success. And some days, writing nothing is also a success.
- Think about the 'shape' of your writing. If you want to write about something and it isn't happening one way, is there another approach which might help you say what you want to say?
- Dive in and have a go. The idea writing is for a “select few” is not true: you may be amazed at what you can achieve.
- Remember everyone has their own story to tell.

What is this?

This booklet [?] and audio were developed by young people, for young people.

In this intro, we want to let you know a few things, so you feel confident and happy writing just for yourself and your wellbeing. Through activities which are fun, cathartic, or both: this is creative writing, but on your time and your terms.

Our team was made up of young writers who have taken part in the Beyond Words programme with Cheltenham Festivals, working with the writers-in-residence.

Beyond Words was a writing for wellbeing programme where a group of young people worked with a Writer-in-Residence, visiting inspiring locations and writing there. There's more on our team at the back and sprinkled throughout.

What This Isn't:

Through our meetings and the design process, we decided some things didn't want this resource to be. This booklet and audio are not:

- All going to work for everyone. Take what works, leave what doesn't – we don't mind!
- Just for people who are really into English at school. That's only one place and one way of writing – there are lots of others and we want to introduce them to you. So it's also
- A tick-box exercise. It's not about English curriculum jargon or 'Education'. There isn't any of that here – it's meant for everyone.
- Just about 'enjoying' writing. You don't even have to like what you've written!
- Pretending that writing more will automatically make you feel better.
- About finishing something and making it perfect. Keep it about the process – focusing on perfection just leads to anxiety!

Who is <Title> for?

- This booklet is for young people aged 14 to 21 [?]. The activities and the way it's put together are meant to relate directly to the stuff that's going on, at this point in your life.
- It's not just meant for use in mainstream schools and colleges, but for young people in alternative provisions, PRUs, who are home schooled, at home, in training and apprenticeships, or anywhere else.
- This is for all young people, to use as and when they like, on a bus or train, at home, when you're out and about. It's meant for your enjoyment and creative flow.
- Our group have experience being in alternative education and want to take the lead in showing how writing can be a part of your life: not just your studies, but for yourself.

What's in it?

<Title> is not about exams and not about (whisper it) *assessment criteria*.

There'll be a mix of practical activities of different length, so you can fit these around your usual life. On the bus? You can still write, if you want. Need something to help you go to sleep, or wake up? Here it is.

It's flexible: there'll be examples and different ways to get started and keep going. But if something doesn't work for you, that's totally fine – try something else.

You can hear the team and guests read their work and talk about the process, by scanning the QR codes and listening to the audio.

As well as activities, you'll find thoughts on the writing life, from the Beyond Words writers-in-residence and other writers too. There'll be ways to write on your own, or together.

Stay Creative and Stay Safe

Writing and sharing your writing can be great way to connect to yourself and your fellow writers. If you're writing for your own enjoyment and wellbeing, it can be helpful to think this through.

We've come up with some questions to reflect on about this, so you can make your own choice about what, when, where and how to share your writing:

- Do you feel ready to share this with somebody?
- Is this writing something to share at all? Do you want to keep it?
- Is there anything personal in it you haven't shared with someone before?
- What are your 'personal criteria' for the piece? What are you hoping for and what is meaningful to you?
- If you're intending to share your writing, when, where and with who, does it feel safe to do so?
- Some writers share on social media. Does that feel safe for you?
- If you're sharing to social media, think is it: True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, Kind (THINK)?
- Are there any staff, teachers, or support workers you might share your writing with?
- What might you do if you get an unexpected reaction to your work?
- How will your reader/listener feel when they hear your words? Will they feel OK too?
- If what you've written feels like 'too much' right now, can you find an angle, metaphor, different voice, etc, which will make it more manageable?
- Don't punch down, punch up: is there a target of your writing and is that OK? (Some writing is for you alone and might be best kept private.)
- A piece of writing being 'true' doesn't mean it has to be factual - have you named anyone in the piece of writing? How might they feel and do you need to?

Signposting

Sometimes, writing can bring up difficult feelings and memories.

We thought it was important that you could contact organisations around particular issues, or to continue to develop your writing.

At the back of this resource, there is a list of organisations related to mental health, wellbeing, young people's interests and, of course, writing, for you to explore.

We might not have covered everything, so do search elsewhere if you don't find what you're looking for.

Be sure to take care of yourself and ask for help if you feel you need it.