All around you are things to write about. Anything you see, hear, taste, touch, or smell, and what you think of it is something to tell about in your own words.

—Girl Scout Handbook, 1940

Scribe

Words are powerful tools. Great writing can make people feel encouraged, entertained, or excited. It can create fantasy worlds or preserve events from history. And just writing down your feelings actually makes you feel better! In this badge, find out what *you* can do with words.

Steps

1. Start with a poem
2. Create a short story
3. Use words to share who you are
4. Write an article
5. Tell the world what you think

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to write different kinds of stories—both true tales and ideas from my imagination.

More to Explore

Hieroglyphics

Some languages use pictures to show words instead of letters. Egyptians used hieroglyphics. Try writing your poem with these. Or make up your own picture "letters."

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more!

TIPS BEFORE TAKEOFF

- The best way to learn to write is to read!
- Read your creations to family and friends, and ask them for helpful comments. Getting comments might be tough, but that's how you know if you got your message across!

STEP 1 Start with a poem

There are all kinds of poems—some are short, some long, some rhyme, some don't. A poem is a chance to share your feelings and ideas about anything you want, so have fun and let your creativity flow!

CHOICES – DO ONE:

☐ **Write one haiku and one limerick.** Haiku are three-line Japanese poems. They are most often about nature. Limericks are Irish poems of five lines. They rhyme and are usually very funny.

FOR MORE FUN: Write a poem in hieroglyphics. (See the box.)

OR

☐ **Write one sonnet.** Sonnets are 14 lines. Shakespeare, one of the most famous writers in the English language, wrote lots of them, mostly about love and relationships. Your topic might be what you like most about your friends.

OR

☐ **Write a free-verse poem.** "Free verse" means you write your poem with any number of lines, and any number of syllables in a line . . . you create a poem that's your very own style.

More to Explore

Pretend you're a Girl Scout in 1940. As girls did to earn their Writer badge, keep a daily notebook. For a month, write poems or prose about your feelings and what you see. At the end of the month, compare your first entries with your last ones to see how much your writing has improved.

how to write form poems

If you want to start with the form and then add your own style, go for it!

Haiku do not rhyme, but their three lines always follow a pattern: five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. This haiku is by Basho.

An old silent pond. . .
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.

Limericks are short, rhyming poems that are usually funny. They are five lines long. The first, second, and fifth lines usually rhyme with each other, and then the third and fourth lines also rhyme (a-a-b-b-a). Most limericks introduce a character in the first line.

"There was an Old Man with a Beard," by Edward Lear

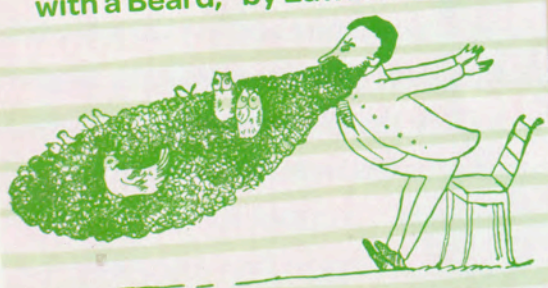


Illustration by Edward Lear from *Nonsense Books*, 1888

There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, "It is just as I feared!—
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard!"

Each of the 14 lines in a **sonnet** has 10 syllables. In the first three parts, called "stanzas," every other line rhymes in this pattern: a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g. The last two lines rhyme with each other.

Number 43
(from *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1850)

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Read other writers' work for inspiration if you get stuck. That's called "writer's block," and it happens to everyone!

More to Explore

Story Prompts. A great way to practice writing longer stories is to try your hand at short scenes. Authors often do this by responding to "prompts" like these. When you write from a prompt, just let the story flow—don't worry about anything but getting your ideas down. Try writing one page:

- With the first line, "That's enough of that."
- In which someone hollers, "Love the hat!"
- In which the word *helpful* is important
- Containing three missing tomatoes
- With a snail, a salamander, and a rhinestone necklace
- Of a fairy tale with three wishes
- In which the last line is, "That's my story and I'm sticking to it."
- With two goldfish and a hotel room
- Of searching for some lost object colored red
- Closely observing the brushing of teeth
- In which something unexpected turns up in a coffee cup

—Thanks to author Abigail Thomas for these prompts.

STEP 2

Create a short story

Stories are made up of characters (the people in the story), plot (what's happening in the story), and setting (where the story takes place). Make up a five-page story in one of these categories.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

☐ **Mystery.** If you've ever been sucked into a good mystery story, you know how much fun they can be! They usually involve a detective—like Sammy Keyes or Gilda Joyce—and a crime. What kind of detective will you write about? One your age, or an adult? What type of crime will they investigate?

OR

☐ **Humor.** If you like to make people laugh, check out stories by funny writers like Roald Dahl or Gennifer Choldenko for inspiration. Remember that even if your goal is to be humorous, you still need interesting characters with a story to tell!

OR

☐ **Adventure.** Are you drawn to action-packed stories about characters who face big challenges, or do you love imagining fantasy worlds? An adventure story might be a good fit for you. Writers like Cornelia Funke and Ingrid Law may help you come up with ideas.

Tip: If beginning seems hard, start writing the answers to these questions: Who are your characters? What's happening? Where are they? Then fill in the story as you go. A story is often easier to create if your characters have to overcome hard situations and conflicts.

STEP

3 Use words to share who you are

Autobiographical stories are ones that have happened to you. Begin the same way you did when you told the story from your imagination—with characters, plot, and setting. This time, add lots of detail about how you felt and what you thought in a one-page "sketch" about one of these topics.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- ☐ **A favorite Girl Scout memory.** It could be a single moment during a meeting or a whole week at camp.

OR

- ☐ **A memorable day.** Include lots of details about what you did and why you remember the day so well.

OR

- ☐ **A big adventure.** Tell your readers where you went, who was with you, and what made it exciting. Did you learn anything from the experience?

Judging a Cover by Its Book

Who decides what to show on a book's cover? Cover designers come up with several ideas, and the author and publisher decide together what will make the book seem most interesting. They try to read the reader's mind—what image would make someone pick up this book instead of another?

What would you put on the cover of *your* story if it were a book?

Cover Story

This book is about an 8th-grade girl whose parents are obsessed with Shakespeare—which doesn't make her life easy! The designers thought this image helped explain Hamlet's feelings. (At the photo shoot, they even chewed the gum so it would stick just right!) Then, they tried out some different color schemes. The cover on the right was chosen, since white covers appear to "**pop**" off the shelf.

Photo: Ryan Cooley; Design: Jeanine Henderson; Copyright: Penguin Young Readers Group.

Quotes

Quotes are interesting opinions or important things that people say. They can add support or "color" (that's fun!) to your article. When you write a quote in your article, it should be set apart with quotation marks—and make sure you name who said it. Look at articles in newspapers or magazines for examples.

STEP 4

Write an article

An article is a type of story you might find in a newspaper or magazine. There are many different types of articles, but they all give the facts—not the writer's opinions. Writers answer the "5 Ws" to get the facts:

Who? What? Where? When? Why?

Most articles also start with a sentence called the "lede" that gives the readers the most interesting or important fact first. Your article doesn't have to be long—but it should answer the 5 Ws!

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- ☐ **An interview article.** Talk to a family member or friend and ask them questions about a specific event or about themselves. Once you've interviewed them, write an article using their answers.

OR

- ☐ **A news story.** Create an article about something that happened in Girl Scouts, at school, or in your community.

OR

- ☐ **A "roundup" article.** This is an article where you interview different people about the same subject. Talk to at least five people and ask them one question, for example: What was your favorite field trip last year?

Tip: Start the article with a lede about why the question is important. You can also add descriptions of the mood of the people when they gave their answers. Were they excited? Angry? Surprised?

STEP

5 Tell the world what you think

An essay gives facts—but is written from the author's point of view. So unlike an article, an essay is chance for you to share your thoughts and feelings. Write a two-page essay about one of these things, and try to include five facts along with your opinion!

CHOICES – DO ONE:

☐ **A favorite animal.** If you love elephants, for example, you might include facts about their trunks, along with your observations about how a trunk could come in handy if you were an elephant.

OR

☐ **A place you'd like to visit.** You might share some facts you've read, along with your own ideas of what it would be like to go there, and what you would do.

OR

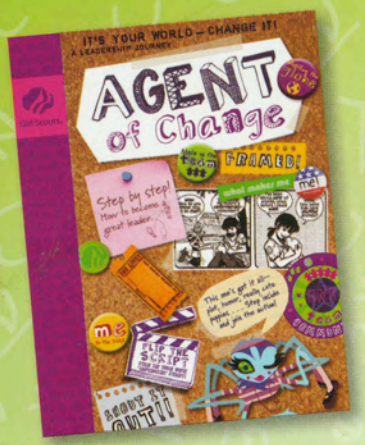
☐ **Your favorite book.** It might be fun to include a few of your favorite lines from the book (called an "excerpt"), along with your thoughts on what they mean.

I think the mystery will be about the letters! And if someone slipped a letter under my door, I'd want it to say . . .

Excerpt from THE WESTING GAME
by Ellen Raskin

"Then one day (it happened to be the 4th of July), a most uncommon-looking delivery boy rode around town slipping letters under the doors of the chosen tenants-to-be. The letters were signed Barney Northrup.

The delivery boy was sixty-two years old, and there was no such person as Barney Northrup."



Add the Badge to Your Journey

For step 4, use this opportunity to write an article about your Power of Community Take Action project. Interview some of the people you've met, write about how the project makes a difference, and what you learned from it, too! Maybe a local newspaper will even publish it.

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Writing a bedtime story to share with a younger girl or a sibling
- Helping Brownies with their writing
- Interviewing an expert and sharing what I learn in an article

I'm inspired to: