

FUN WITH WORDS

You're going to make and use word tickets. I got this idea from one of my favorite books: "Poemcrazy" by Susan Goldsmith Wooldridge.

1. Create a stockpile of pieces of paper each with a single word on it. Your words can be anything: stuff you see sitting around, words you love, words that sound poetic, words taken from the phone book. Even words that begin with each letter of the alphabet. Random words.

2. Work in freeform. See what comes out of your mind using only the word tickets...just move them around. Have fun creating phrases, silly sentences, quotes, even a whole poem.

The point is to remind you that it's okay to play with words once in a while. It's also ok to have fun with words and experiment without the limits set by our English teachers.

3. Spread your word tickets out in front of you and quickly pick five or six of them. On a piece of paper, write one of the words at the top of the page. Skip down a bit and write another word from your word tickets. Continue to write the rest of the words on the page in random areas.

Go back to the first word and start writing. Take the first thought that comes to you when you see that first word and go with it. When you reach one of the words you've already written down, incorporate that in the piece. Don't worry if it doesn't make sense, just write until you get to another word; use the word, then continue. If you get stuck, keep repeating the last thing you wrote until something pops into your head. When you're done writing, give the piece a name. Try it again with another set of word tickets.

4. Spread your word tickets out in front of you, face down, and pick five random tickets. After you pick your tickets, turn one over and write the word down at the top of a piece of paper. This is your topic. Now free write on your topic and at random times turn over another one of the random tickets and insert the word in your piece. Continue doing this until you have used all five of the tickets.

Don't worry about whether or not your piece makes sense, just have fun playing around with the topic. When you're done, start with a new set of random words. Try this exercise using more or less than five tickets.

5. Select a favorite poem that you would like to alter. Now select ten word tickets that make you feel good. Rewrite the poem you selected, randomly replacing words in the poem with the word tickets you selected. Rearrange the lines if that appeals to you or replace lines in the poem with lines of your own, incorporating your random word tickets.