

Writing Prompts

Hello! I'm Ali Luke, a freelance writer and writing coach. These prompts are taken from [Writers' Cafe](#), my online community for writers.

As well as weekly writing prompts, we have weekly check-ins for members to share their progress, plus several weekly live writing hours where we get together, briefly share what we'll be working on, then write.

Using the Writing Prompts

You can use these writing prompts in any way you like.

You may want to simply take the prompt word and brainstorm some ideas around it, you might like to focus on the image, or you may want to use my thoughts about the prompt to help spur your own ideas.

The prompts can be used to start you off on a new piece of writing, or they can help you bring a new element or fresh perspective to what you're working on.

They're designed for fiction writers (particularly novelists), though you could also give them a try for non-fiction writing.

Prompt 1: Shell



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

You might want to think about:

- Shells protect the creature inside, but can also be constricting. We sometimes talk about people “coming out of their shell” if they’ve been shy and reluctant to join in with others. Are any of your characters coming out of their shell in this way?
- Shells can be useful tools: they can hold water, be used to scoop or dig, be used for cooking food, create a noise (e.g. to call others to gather), and more. Could a shell, or something similar, play a role in your story?
- Shells are also decorative and can carry memories. Do your characters have any symbols of special trips? That might not be a shell, but perhaps a stone, feather, pine cone, or any other natural item.

Prompt 2: Spice



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

You might want to think about:

- Spice can be mild, strong, savory, or sweet. What types of spice might suit your characters? Are there any characters who could have an edge or stronger quality within your story, like the addition of spice into a food?
- You'll often hear a story described as "spicy" if there are explicit sex scenes. If your story has romantic elements, what level of "spice" feels right for you and your audience?
- In Frank Herbert's *Dune*, the fictional drug "spice" is highly valuable and pivotal to the story: it has psychotropic effects, lengthens human life, and is used for safe navigation through space. What substances (not necessarily drugs!) are hugely significant to your characters and their world?

Prompt 3: Clay



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

You might want to think about:

- The fragile nature of clay pots: they can be easily broken once finished and could even be dented or misshapen during the creation process—meaning the potter needs to squash the clay back into a lump and start over.
- The messy process of creating something from clay. The finished product (once fired and glazed) might look beautiful, but getting there could involve mess. The writing process can feel similar...!
- The creative nature of clay: children can use air-drying clay to make 3D creations, and pottery classes are popular with adults trying out a new hobby.

Prompt 4: Flower



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

You might want to think about:

- How the beauty of flowers is fleeting. They don't bloom for long each year (and they last an even shorter time if they're cut and placed in a vase). What phase might be beautiful but fleeting for your characters? Who might be languishing out of their usual environment?
- The potentially dangerous side of flowers. Some flowers and plants are poisonous, even deadly. There are even carnivorous flowers, like the Venus Flytrap, that consume insects. Are any of your characters beautiful ... but hostile?
- In general, flowers blooming can be symbolic of hope (and of life more broadly) in a story. But specific flowers also have particular meanings: think of red roses for romantic love or lilies for sympathy. In the 19th century in the UK, the Victorians had a whole [language of flowers](#). Could you use a flower as a symbol within your story?

Prompt 5: Bread



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

You might want to think about:

- The sharing of bread: might your characters come together over a meal? Is this a fraught occasion or a happy one? How do different character dynamics and relationships play out around meals and eating together?
- The symbolic nature of bread. That could be religious (communion), historically-inspired (e.g. “bread and circuses”), or based on a story (e.g. The Little Red Hen).
- What meanings bread—or food in general—could have for your characters. Perhaps one loves to bake. Maybe another has started a new low-carb diet. Another might buy artisanal sourdough. All of these could say things about who your characters are as people ... and may have an impact on the plot.

Prompt 6: Leaf



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

You might want to think about:

- The seasons! Whether you're using the colour of the leaves, buds on the trees, or some other sign, how could you show the season(s) of your story?
- The fragile, brittle nature of fallen leaves. They can so easily break or tear. What characters or situations in your story might feel similarly fragile?
- How those leaves can also fly so easily in the winds. Who in your story might seem fragile but actually be ready to fly?

Prompt 7: Knife



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

You might want to think about:

- How a knife can be a tool—potentially a life-saving one (think about a surgeon’s knife)—as well as a weapon. Whether a knife is helpful or harmful depends not on the knife itself but on the person using it.
- Different types of knife that your story might involve ... and the implied meanings of these. A penknife will mean something different to the reader from a kitchen knife. A modern “zombie knife” is going to imply a very different type of character than a “scimitar” ... though both could be used as weapons.
- Symbolic meanings of knives, or symbolic acts with knives. These will likely reflect your character’s culture. For instance, in some cultures, giving a knife as a gift can have specific resonances.

Prompt 8: Chair



Image source: [Pixabay](https://pixabay.com/)

You might want to think about:

- The way that a chair can symbolise status. For instance, a character sitting in the chair at the “head of the table” may be seen as the leader within a family. Or on an even bigger scale, a throne signals royalty.
- How something like a chair that blends into the background normally could become significant when out of place: an armchair out on the street, for instance.
- What a particular chair might mean to your character. It could be their comfy space. It might be the chair they sat in to nurse their baby. Or it could be an item of furniture given by family—does it come with wonderful memories or pressured expectations?

Prompt 9: Crystal



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

You might want to think about:

- Crystals can be associated with wealth and elegance. (Think of a crystal chandelier, for instance.) Are any of your characters wealthy? How is this wealth displayed: ostentatiously or subtly?
- Some people believe that crystals have special properties, particularly of healing. Do any of your characters use crystals in this way (or have other alternative/new age beliefs)?
- The word “crystal” crops up in common phrases like “crystal clear” and “crystal ball” ... could either of those suggest a plot point or character dynamic in your story?

Prompt 10: River



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

You might want to think about:

- The different moods or feelings we might associate with a river. You could have a tranquil, gentle river, perhaps little more than a stream ... or a dangerous, fast-flowing river that could sweep people away.
- The ever-changing nature of a river: the water is always moving and flowing. We sometimes associate rivers with life itself, being swept along in a fast current at times, and drifting gently at others. How might that fit with your characters?
- How a river might be important in your plot. There's obvious potential for drama (e.g. a character falls in, or jumps in to save someone) but a river could be a less dramatic part of the setting. Maybe one of your characters travels the river, makes a living from it, or has a deep connection with it.

Get More Prompts (and Support!)

I hope you've enjoyed these writing prompts. If you'd like weekly prompts – along with weekly check-ins and support from fellow writers, regular live writing hours, and more – then take a look at Writers' Cafe.

Writers' Cafe

Writers' Cafe is my online community for writers. Most of the writers in the Cafe are novelists (or working towards writing a novel), but we also have people writing short stories, blog posts, freelance articles, and more. Whatever kind of writing you're doing, we'd love to have you join us.

We're a friendly, supportive bunch of writers who'll cheer you on during the good weeks – and encourage you during the not-so-good ones.

In the Cafe, you'll find:

- Weekly writing prompts in case you need a little inspiration.
- Weekly check-ins to help you stay on track and accountable.
- Live writing hours (usually 5 per week) so you can make real progress.
- A dedicated Feedback space where you can share your work.
- Plenty of opportunities to ask me any writing questions you have.

You can find out all about the Cafe and join us here:

aliventures.com/writers-cafe