

Grit and Grace: Creativity Exercises: Getting Started

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If you want to practice creating in a situation where you don't have a clear project or assignment, consider the following options for beginning a creative process. These options are all intentionally left vague so as not to constrain you before you get started.

1. Start with your senses: a view, a sound, a physical feeling.
2. Start with a memory.
3. Start with a yearning.
4. Start with an idea.
5. Start with your emotions.
6. Start with an art form that is not your art form.
7. Start with a problem and solve it.
8. Start with research.
9. Start with a stranger and tell their story.
10. Start with a non-living thing and tell its story or give it opinions. (Dean Friedman once wrote a song called "Well, Well, Said the Rocking Chair.")
11. Start with an urgent message.
12. Start with a work in your art form that you don't like. Create a version that you do like.
13. Start with nature or the natural world.
14. Start with a vision of the world in which things are different. What's different? How? Why? With what effect?
15. Start with a relationship.
16. Start with a dilemma.
17. Start with a conversation.
18. Start with a lie.

19. Start with the truth.
20. Start with the Bible or another source of inspiration.
21. Start with Jesus or someone else who inspires you.
22. Start with a stereotype and mess with it.
23. Start with a place that is meaningful to you, somewhere you can visualize and feel.
24. Start with a job, career, or social role.
25. Start with a genre or style. Copy it faithfully or fiddle with it.
26. Start with a minor character and make them the star. (Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* does this with *Hamlet*.)
27. Start with your frailty.
28. Start with your resilience.
29. Start with something no one knows about you.
30. Start with something everyone knows about you and complicate things.
31. Start with the last thing you will ever say to someone important in your life. (Stephen Schwartz did this to write the song "For Good" for the musical *Wicked*.)
32. Start with the one thing you never got to say to someone important who is no longer alive.
33. Start with everything that's wrong with the world.
34. Start with everything that's right with the world.
35. Start with wonder.
36. Start with gratitude.
37. Start by creating a prayer without words.
38. Start with two already existing but very different creative products and bring them together.
39. Start with the title of a book or song or play or some other cultural product.
40. Start by rejecting the previous 39 ideas in favor of a better one.