



My goal is to transmit joy with story...

Dear Teachers,

I'm an author and storyteller, and I'm going to be coming to your school.

I hope that my program is not an interruption, but will be a fun event that supports your teaching. I often tell teachers, "I don't know what you need, so please ask me leading questions." You can also email me in advance. ([mark@transmitjoy.com](mailto:mark@transmitjoy.com))

Depending on the program, I will be reading stories, telling stories, answering questions, and perhaps doing a workshop. The stories will be adjusted by grade level, so if you can attend more than one session, you'll likely hear a different set.

Ideally, my in-school work is both educational and entertaining for your students—and you too. Aside from transmitting the joy of writing, reading, listening and telling stories, I frequently emphasize the time it takes to revise a piece, the importance of reading widely and the power of language to communicate ideas.

If you get a moment, take a look at my body of books and audio, and at the teacher's guides on my website (<http://markbinder.com/teacher-guides/>).

Thanks so much!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Binder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Binder

P.S. I hope you'll also enjoy yourself enough to buy some of my books. You can use the order form and I'll sign them. If you'd to deduct it from your taxes, write your email address and SEND RECIEPT on the form.

P.P.S. *Please* keep in touch when the event is done. I answer **all** email from teachers and students. Send your questions and comments to: [mark@markbinder.com](mailto:mark@markbinder.com)



# Mark Binder's Transmit Joy Writing Workshop



## Workshop Room Setup and Requirements

### Room needs

1. Enough table and chair space for all students and teachers to sit and write comfortably
2. Black board and chalk or dry erase board and markers or several sheets of large poster paper and markers
3. Extra Pens and Pencils
4. Extra Paper
5. Trash Can
6. Prefer NO Pencil Sharpener (only if necessary. They're a distraction)

### Each student and teacher needs

1. Desk or Table Writing Space
2. Chair
3. Lots of blank writing paper. Journals are ok, but make sure there are plenty of pages
4. Pen -- preferred to pencil. Pencil if necessary  
Pens are useful because you CAN'T erase



# Mark Binder's Transmit Joy Writing Workshop

## Student Handout



**STARTING POINT—Who is your Audience/Readers/Listeners?**

**TYPE OF WORK – Fiction/NonFiction?**

**RESEARCH – Do you need to do research before starting?**

**UNLOCKING CREATIVITY/FLOW**

- Just Begin!
- Don't stop or censor yourself. (You can always fix or delete later)
- Use "Yes, And..." instead of "No or But..."
- Keep adding details
  - Characters
  - Setting
  - Senses
  - Actions
  - Dialog
  - Complications
  - Problems and Challenges
- Nothing is stupid/dumb/bad to begin with – You can always change and edit later

**SHAPING THE NARRATIVE**

- Begin reincorporating (bringing elements back in) as soon as you like.
- Continue adding details
- Continue reincorporating

**DRAFTS and COMPLETION**

- Save Your Work! (Early and Often)
- When all important elements have been reincorporated, piece is "done"
- Print out piece
- Read Aloud
- Make notes (Scribbledraft)

**REVISION and REWRITING**

- Rework on paper and then into computer.
- Repeat Reading/Scribble/Revision
- Ask someone else to read it.
- Repeat until done!
- Declare it complete!

**NOTES on FEEDBACK**

- Listen to your teachers! Try what they suggest.



# Mark Binder's Transmit Joy Writing Workshop

## Teacher Brief Guide



**STARTING POINT**—Who is your Audience/Readers/Listeners?

### **BASIC STORY Structure**

- Beginning, Middle and End
- Digression/Complications
- Adding Elements and Reincorporation

### **STARTING POINTS to develop the story**

- Theme/Concept – Lesson to be taught – Goal of the Story
- What do you want this story to be about? Try to be specific.
- First Ideas & Second Ideas
- Characters
- Brilliant Ending

### **DEVELOPING THE STORY**

- Research Phase—
- Hook at the beginning
- Twists and Shouts – the complexities of the story.
- Lamé ideas
- Flash of Genius
- Setting(s) – Locations – where does the story take place?
- Gratuitous Jokes
- Key Details

### **BONUS POINTS**

- Senses – Five senses
- Mood/Atmosphere
- Imagery, allusion, subtext
- Language to elaborate the story
- Physicality
- Vocalizations (spoken)

### **REVISION**

- Editing and Proof reading (retelling)
- Elaboration. What needs to be added
- Cutting. What is extra?
- Reincorporation of new elements
- Testing and retesting

### **COMPLETION When is a piece done?**

- When it's turned in/performed
- When you say so



# Mark Binder's Writing For Fun Workshop



## Detailed Teacher's Handout

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions  
email: [mark@markbinder.com](mailto:mark@markbinder.com)  
<http://www.markbinder.com/>

### Workshop Goal:

To clearly communicate a method for creating and shaping stories.

### Teacher Participation

Teachers may participate as facilitators or as participants. In other words, you may "take" the workshop beside your students, or assist with the workshop by helping to model following the "coaching" process (see below).

### What is a story?

Stories are spoken or written narratives. They are collections of events shaped by the author/teller and experienced by the reader/listener\*. Stories may be fiction or nonfiction, they may be true or "false." The best stories always ring true, and by using this method, almost any narrative can be shaped into a powerful (or at least enjoyable) story.

### Story Components

There is a huge laundry-list of items that can go into a story. They include: characters, setting, plot, beginnings, middles and ends, descriptions, narrative arcs, themes, morals and so on.

### What makes a story work?

For a story to be effective it needs only a very few elements.

- 1) Clear communication – whether spoken or written
  - a. Clearly written/legible
  - b. Loud enough to be heard (or quiet enough room)
  - c. Consistent grammatical presentation.
  - d. Few or no inconsistencies. In other words, no mentions of rocket ships in a 1776 historical narrative.
- 2) Reincorporation of most, if not all elements. (See below)

### Unlocking Creativity – Creating a story

Stories are created from many different angles. Some stories start with titles. Some start with themes. Some start with settings. (Some start with assignments...)

Since this method is based on improvisation, it is important to work on avoiding censoring creativity – especially in fictional narrative. In other words, if someone introduces a rocket ship in a 1776 narrative, let it go and see if it can be edited out later. Otherwise let go of the idea that the narrative is meant to be set exclusively in 1776 as we expect it to be.



# Mark Binder's Writing For Fun Workshop



## Some Common Examples

- *Goldilocks and the three bears*  
When the porridge, chairs, beds and bears have all been reintroduced, the story is complete
- *The Brave Little Tailor*  
When the tailor retells his victories while the guards are about to attack, the tale is almost done. When the king sees him alive, the story is done.
- *George Washington and the Cherry Tree*  
By telling his father the truth, George reintroduces the tree.
- *The Story of Rosa Parks*  
Although there are many events that make up this story, following the Supreme Court's decision, when the busses in Montgomery, Alabama are finally desegregated, the story is most powerful complete only when the narrator describes Rosa Parks riding the bus and sitting wherever she likes.
- *The Lord of the Rings*  
When the rings are unmade, the story is nearly done. When everyone's final tales are told the story is nearly done. When Frodo returns to the Shire, the story is nearly done. When all meet to sail away, and Bilbo is included, the story is done.

## Completing a Story

A story is complete when every major element has been reintroduced. This is a visceral feeling. It just works.

## Editing and Revision (Part Two)

Allow the editing and revision to take place long after the first-draft occurs. If edits and self-censoring happen too early it often shuts down new ideas.

### Editing methods include:

- Read-aloud (and make notes for changes)
- Omit needless words (and elements)
- Find dangling elements and reincorporate them
- Shift around the plot points to make the story more interesting or powerful
- Ask for help. Useful questions include:
  - o What was missing?
  - o Was there anything you didn't understand?
  - o Were you bored? When/where?

I highly recommend the use of paper and pencil beyond the printer. Printed text looks far too "finished." Students need to see the scribbles to understand that the text is imperfect and malleable.

## Applying Reincorporation to non-fiction

The basic/traditional essay form is all about reincorporation

- 1) Topic Paragraph – states what's coming
- 2) Topic Sentence in Each paragraph – states what's coming
- 3) Concluding sentences in each paragraph – state what's been
- 4) Concluding paragraph – restates what's been said/written



# Mark Binder's Writing For Fun Workshop



## FAQ: More Detailed Description

### How do you produce an "instant" story?

You can start with an idea, an opening sentence, or nothing at all.

As you go, don't censor yourself. Just get it all down. In the old days, they called this part "automatic writing."

Your story will putter along, and you'll begin introducing elements — bears, chairs, girls with golden hair and so on. Or they may be more complex — lovers, mysterious strangers, odd habits with cigarettes....

The Instant Short Story works on the basis of reincorporation -- every element you include in your story is reincorporated, reweven, into the fabric of the story. Your story develops with new elements, it grows as these are reincorporated, and it finishes when everything has been accounted for.

### Can you give an example?

Take a quick look at Goldilocks and the three bears. The story is a perfect example of adding elements and then reincorporating them. You have the title, then the bears making porridge and leaving. Reincorporate Goldilocks (from the title) and the porridge. Then we introduce the chairs and the beds. Reincorporate the bears, the porridge, the chairs, the beds and Goldilocks! Done.

### It sounds too simple

Yes, it does.

The three most difficult aspects to creating stories with this method are

1. Allowing the mind to create the initial and ongoing elements without censorship.  
As people write, most people's brains are short-circuited by a number of thoughts including, "That's dumb... I can't make a story about a giant peach... That's weird... I can't write a story about a wizard father and daughter trapped on an island... I already did that... I can't write another story about a kid growing up..." and so on. Self-censorship often stops stories from having the interesting and intriguing elements that keep the piece alive. The best practice is to write everything down -- silly, stupid, great or awful, and sort it out later.
2. Reincorporating the events  
The same conversations come up as you reincorporate -- I can't do that, no, that's too obvious, I don't want to. Do it anyway.
3. Reincorporate everything and then stop. Some stories go beyond this point and get boring. Obviously, developing stories using this method does take practice. Not every story is a gem, but over time (and with 20 years experience, I can say that you do get better) you'll be able to hit your mark. (Heh.)

### Some other tips:

1. If the story is boring, throw it out and start over
2. If you're having trouble reincorporating elements -- then add new ones. The story may be too short.



# Mark Binder's Writing For Fun Workshop



## Story Writing and Creating

Once a story is begun, the author must begin to add elements. When she gets stuck, she can

- 1) Ask for help
- 2) Do research
- 3) Change tactics/paths
- 4) Take a break (if there's time)
- 5) Get random – if it's appropriate to the story

## Boredom

Boredom is important. It means something either needs to be added, cut or reincorporated. In other words, if something is boring then it's either too long, not interesting enough, or hasn't reincorporated something.

## Editing and Revision (Part One)

We'll get to editing and revision later.

## Keep Going

One of the crucial elements to using this method is to keep going. Keep adding. Keep reincorporating. Don't get stuck. Don't let students get stuck.

## How does "Coaching" work?

Coaching in this process is about keeping the writing moving. It's not about "getting it right" but about continuing to write! In other words, give answers, tell students how to spell things, if they ask for help, give it to them. Come up with the first thing that pops into your head. (If they don't like what you suggested, tell them to come up with their own ideas.) Feel free to repeat suggestions for other students.

## What is "reincorporation"?

"If you bring a loaded gun onstage in the first act, it had better be fired by the end of the play."  
—*common theatrical truism*

Starting from the Latin word *corpus*, we begin with the word incorporation and the process of incorporating elements into the body of a story.

In other words, we start at the beginning and keep adding details, characters, events, information and so on.

As long as the author is good, this process can go on for quite some time.

At some point, however, the author will begin "reincorporating" elements. By bringing these back into the story, the story will begin to have shape, form and resonance.

The distinction that transforms any random sequence of events into a narrative is reincorporation of earlier events, characters, actions, settings, etc.

Note: This is a fairly traditional/old-fashioned notion of narrative. It may not apply to modern and post-modern (and post-post-modern) texts.





# Mark Binder's Writing For Fun Workshop



3. Don't hurry.
4. Resist the impulse to rewrite during the first draft. That's why it's the first draft. Other drafts will improve the story. The goal is to get a first draft done. Then you can evaluate and correct.
5. If you do come up with a brilliant idea write it down and allow the story to go that way even if it's not in alignment with what's come before. These are your stories. Don't let the rules get in the way.
6. Reading stories aloud is a good way to learn what works and what doesn't -- what's interesting and what's boring.

## What about editing and revision?

Editing and revision are a different part of the brain. They are 100% necessary, but one of the problems many students have is they want to get it RIGHT the first time. This process is about getting it down and done, and then returning for revision and rewriting. This will be addressed briefly in the workshop.

## Pre-and Post-Workshop Questions and exercises for Students

These can be asked either before or after the workshop -- use them to help develop the enthusiasm the workshop creates. Invent more and invent your own!

- What would you like to write about? What kinds of books do you enjoy?
- Who are your favorite authors? Why?
- Find 10 words you enjoy the sound of and look them up in the dictionary?
- Make up 12 silly names for characters. Describe these characters.
- What is the worst place (setting) you can imagine? What does it look like? Smell like? Sound like?
- Describe the way an ugly sound feels in your stomach...
- List 10 things that can make an unhappy girl (or boy) smile.
- Write and then read aloud one paragraph (at least) a day.
- Tip on writing a long story or novel: write one page a day. At the end of 365 days -- a year -- you'll have 365 pages!

## About Mark Binder

Mark Binder is an author, a storyteller, and a nice guy. He's written dozens of books and half dozen audio recordings. More than 200 of his stories for young and old have been published in magazines, anthologized in books, and used on standardized tests. His "Bedtime Story Book" collection is a multigenerational masterpiece with more than 60,000 copies in print. He is an award-winning recording artist, the founder of the American Story Theater, and teaches a college course in "Telling Lies." For the latest, please visit [Markbinder.com](http://Markbinder.com)

## Additional Reading

Mark Binder's excellent books and audio on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and at [markbinder.com/store/](http://markbinder.com/store/)  
Johnstone, Keith. *Impro - Improvisation and the Theater*, Methuen, 1989.

# Eight Tips for Students Writing With a Computer

by Mark Binder



I've been using computers as a writer for more than three and a half decades.

Here are eight quick tips to help you prevent crashes and always turn in your best work. Follow these, to improve your writing, get better grades, and have less stress!

## 1. When you begin, give project a memorable name and save.

Save your work in a folder called "School Projects" and inside another folder named by subject or teacher. **BONUS:** Use cloud-synching, like Dropbox or Google Drive or iCloud. Ask your parents or teacher for help. This will give you a backup and access to the file in other locations. If you forget to bring in the paper, you can get it at school.

## 2) Save often!

Save every time you pause. Make this a habit. Even though your program may "auto save", sudden power failures or your sister or dog tripping over a power cord might wipe out what you've done.

**BONUS:** Use keyboard commands. Mac use Command-S, Windows & Chrome use Control-S

## 3) Get it ALL done.

Keep writing and working on your project until you finish the first draft. Don't stop and start. (Put your phone in Airplane mode so you don't get interrupted!) If you need to do more research, get to it and then get back to writing. Don't wait until the last minute! A most foolish way to get a worse grade or lose credit on a project is to turn it in late or incomplete.

## 4) Print it out when you are done (after saving, of course).

I DON'T recommend making revisions, especially initial revisions, on the screen. Computer papers look perfect when you print them. They're not. Spellcheck makes mistakes. So did you. You can't see them on the screen. If you don't have a printer at home, print it at school or at the library. You can use Dropbox or google or email or a thumb drive to get the file to the printer.

## 5) Read your printed paper out loud to someone.

I call this the scribble draft. When you do this, have a pen or pencil and take notes about spelling mistakes, sentences that don't make sense, places that are unclear or where you need to add or cut.

- When you read out loud, you're forced to look at every word. If you just skim or read on a screen, you're likely to skip and miss mistakes.
- You can hear what you've written and learn quickly where things don't make sense.
- You can get feedback from your listener. Avoid getting opinions from listeners—except your teacher. Instead get specifics. Don't ask your listener, "Did you like it?"
- Do ask them, "Did it make sense? Were you interested? Were you confused? What was missing?"
- While you're reading out loud, scribble all over the paper. Circle parts that don't make sense. Write question-marks when you're unsure. Fix punctuation. Write notes in the margin for adds or changes.
- Cross out words and sentences and paragraphs that are redundant. (Don't repeat like this!)

## 6) Now go back and revise on the computer.

Put the changes back into the computer. Run a spell check again. Save. Print. Read it aloud again.

The best way to make anything better is through revision. Re-vision means to see something again.

## 7) Repeat steps 4-6 until the project is excellent.

## 8) Turn your work in on time!

Save your final draft. Print it out. Turn it in by the deadline. Or (gasp!) early.

**BONUS:** When your teacher returns the paper, if there are errors, listen to what he or she has to say, and try to learn from the mistakes you've made.

Even if you're a genius, not everything you write will be brilliant the first time. However, if you follow these rules, you're sure to stress less and learn more.

*Mark Binder is the award-winning author of **The Zombie Cat** and **The Bed Time Story Book**. His books, ebooks and audio recordings are available on Amazon, iBooks, Google Play, and iTunes.*

**Please buy copies!** Learn more at [www.markbinder.com](http://www.markbinder.com)