

Writing Notes from Julian

<https://www.julian.com/guide/write>

Writing Quality = Novelty × Resonance



[Examples + Analogies + Story]

Writing Quality = Novelty × Resonance

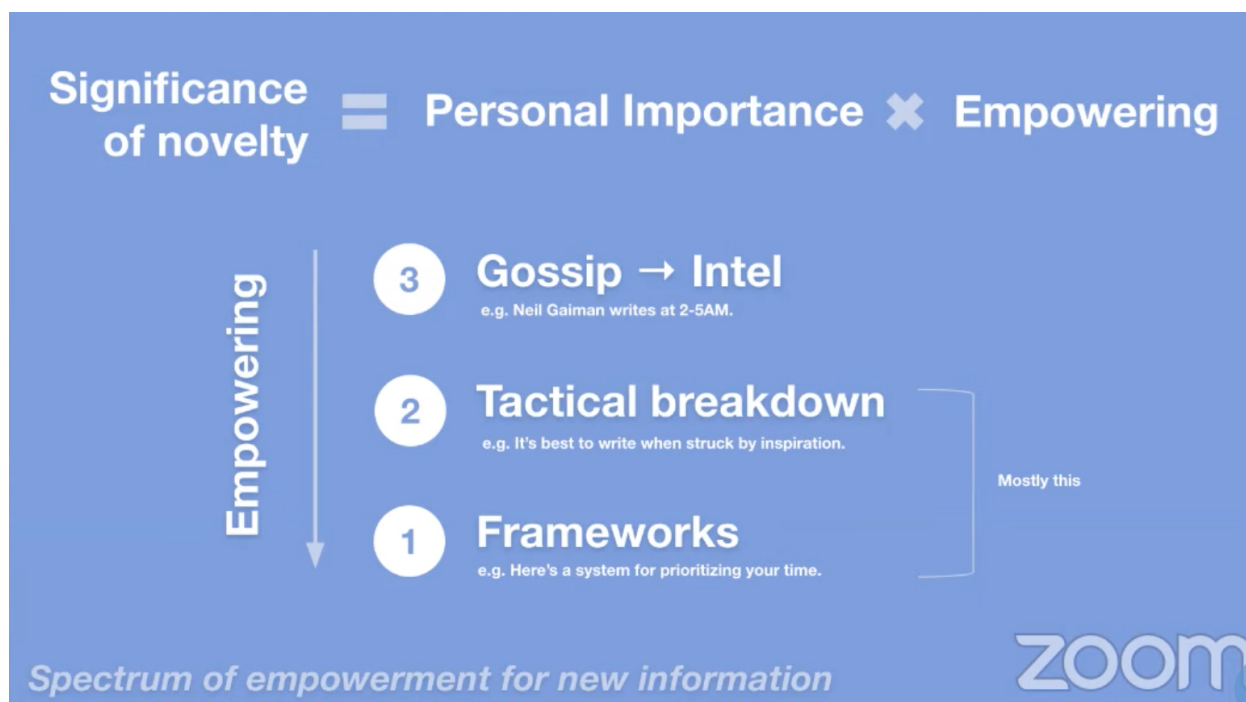
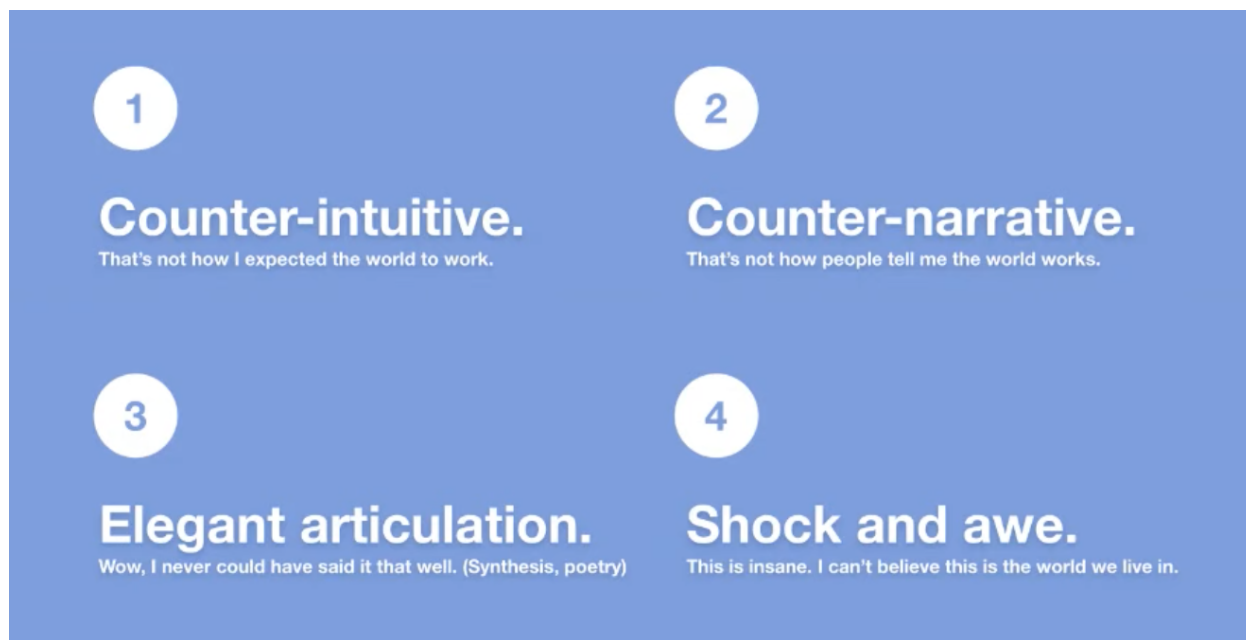


Draft 1



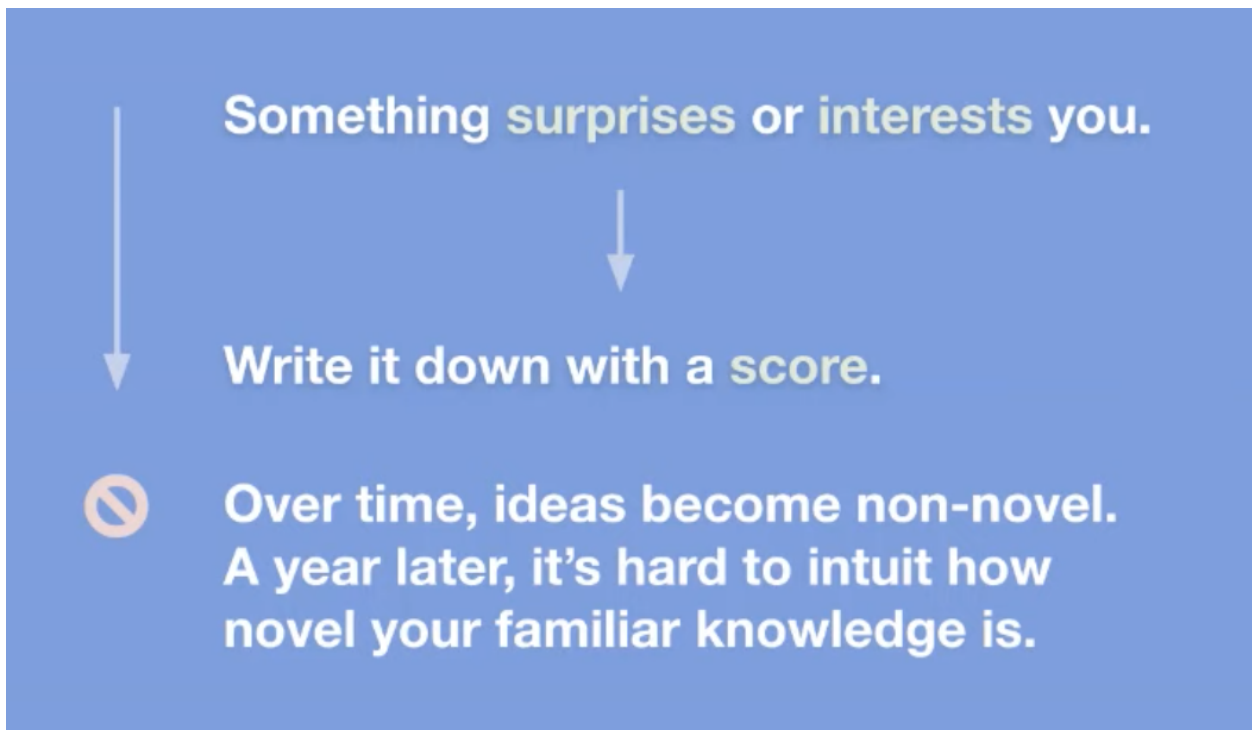
Draft 2

How to write for Novelty:



Don't just focus on what you love, focus on what you're curious about

Get ideas by noting what **interests** and **surprises** you. Or whenever you react to something with “Well that’s obviously not true.”



- score out of 5

Novelty:

Again, novelty is new information that is significant and not easily intuited.

Use analogies to
make new ideas
instantly familiar.

Tight analogy



Loose, no analogy

"If you are too lazy to take notes while reading, you're going to forget most of what you learned. A lack of notetaking makes reading inefficient."

Helping Each Other Achieve Novelty

A hook is any *half*-told story:

- **Questions** — Pose an intriguing question, but don't give the answer.
- **Narratives** — Share the beginning of a narrative, but withhold the conclusion.
- **Discoveries** — Highlight new findings, but only a portion.
- **Arguments** — Present a bold claim, but withhold how you arrived at it.

How to generate hooks

You create hooks by finding questions *you* want answers to then posing those questions in your introduction:

- Ask yourself, "If someone *else* wrote my intro, what are the most captivating questions they could pose to make *me* excited to read this?"
- Write those questions down. Even if you lack the answers.
- Rank your questions by how much they interest you.
- The top questions become your hooks: Pose them in your intro, but don't reveal their answers.

You and your audience evolved the same storytelling machinery in your heads, so questions that hook you will hook many of them too. If they don't, target a different audience that likes what you like.

1 Narrative hooks

Share the beginning of a narrative, but withhold the conclusion. Your goal is providing enough details for readers to feel emotionally connected to your story.

My clothes turned to ice. I swapped them for a fresh pair—only to realize I hadn't actually brought a second pair.

And the ones I removed suddenly took with the wind off the mountainside.

I was now clothesless standing atop an arctic summit. I had no solution for avoiding full-body frostbite and death by hypothermia.

It was 3AM and there was no one was within miles.

That was the day I lost everything.

And this post is the story of what happened next.

2 Discovery hooks

Highlight your fascinating findings, but only a portion.

I tracked all 90 living individuals who were born without the ability to sense pain.

80 of them are living normal lives by following strict day-to-day rules.

The remaining 10, however, are defying everything we know about what it means to survive. They've led to the discovery of fascinating new drugs.

3 Argument hooks

Present a bold claim, but withhold how you arrived at it.

There's a 90% chance that Snapchat goes bankrupt in the next thirty days. This post walks you through the startling corruption that triggered this demise.

- Use feedback for directionality

- Ask several people to rate your intro from 1 to 10 on how interested they are in reading more. Also ask, "If you were writing about this topic, what questions would you most want answered?" (If their questions captivate you, turn them into new hooks.)
- To avoid high scores from friends just wanting to be kind, tell them: "Don't be afraid of giving me a low score. If you tell me this isn't good, you spare me from wasting my time on an article no one wants to read."
- Keep rewriting your hooks and asking for feedback until you reach an average of 8/10. An 8 validates you've identified a compelling perspective on your topic. Don't aim for higher—start writing and improve it further later.

2

Dopamine linecounts.

Ask others which parts of your writing are novel.

1. Identify

2. Delete/
compress.

3. Add dopamine

The creativity faucet

The most valuable writing skill is increasing the frequency of novel ideas.

Last year, I stumbled into a mental model that does this.

I was watching a documentary on songwriter Ed Sheeran. In it, he described his songwriting process. It struck me as identical to the process that author Neil Gaiman detailed in his Masterclass.

Here's the thing.

Ed Sheeran and Neil Gaiman are in the top 0.000001% of their fields. They're among, say, 25 people in the world who consistently generate blockbuster after blockbuster.

If two world-class creators share the exact same creative process, I lean in. (1)

I call their approach the Creativity Faucet:

Visualize your creativity as a backed-up pipe of water. The first mile of piping is packed with wastewater. This wastewater must be emptied before the clear water arrives.

Because your pipe only has one faucet, there's no shortcut to achieving clarity other than first emptying the wastewater.

Let's apply this to creativity: At the beginning of a writing session, you must write out every bad idea that reflexively comes to mind. Instead of being self-critical and resisting these bad ideas, you must openly accept them.

Once the bad ideas are emptied, strong ideas begin to arrive.

Here's why: Once you've generated enough bad output, your brain attenuates to the underlying elements producing the badness. Then it intuitively avoids those elements. It starts pattern-matching novel ideas going forward. (9)

Most creators never get past their wastewater. They resist their bad ideas. (8)

If you've opened a blank document, scribbled a few thoughts, then walked away because you weren't struck with gold, then you too didn't get past it.

Neil and Ed know they're not superhuman. They simply respect the reality of human creativity: **The brain has a rigid, linear pipeline for creativity, and it's inefficient to fight it.** In every creative session, they allot time for clearing the wastewater.

They're not worrying whether clear water will eventually come. It always does: (7)

- You start with a weak imitation.
- You identify what makes the imitation weak.
- You iterate on the imitation until it's original. (4)

