

The Writer's Process Glossary

These are a few of the terms that appear throughout the second edition of *The Writer's Process*.

Attention: The connection between our inner selves and the outer world.

Cognitive load: The mental resources required to do a specific task. As writers, we want to avoid giving our readers unnecessary cognitive load.

Copy editing: Reviewing written content for clarity, accuracy, and grammar. This happens after substantive revisions and before the final proofreading.

Creativity: In the context of writing, this refers to the ability to come up with new or fresh associations or ideas.

Curse of Knowledge: The challenge of imagining the perspective of someone who lacks your knowledge or understanding.

Developmental editing: A comprehensive, high-level analysis of a text for structure, purpose, voice, and organization. This happens early in the editing and revision process.

Dual-pathway model of creativity: A theory suggesting that creativity arises from a balance between cognitive flexibility and persistence. (Nijstad, De Dreu, Rietzschel, and Baas)

Empathy: The ability to share or understand another person's experiences or feelings.

Fixed mindset: The perspective that performance is a product of fixed abilities or talents.

Flow: A state of effortless attention in which one loses track of time and is completely absorbed in the task at hand without self-consciousness or fear.

Focus: The act of directing attention; in most cases, focus refers to the intentional and targeted deployment of attention to a specific activity or task.

Freewriting (also exploratory writing): A process of writing continuously and fluidly for a set period of time or number of words, without stopping to edit, critique, or structure. F

Growth mindset: The belief that one can control one's own performance and expand abilities through growth and learning.

Imposter Syndrome/Phenomenon: The mistaken belief sometimes held by accomplished individuals that they will be discovered as frauds; an inability to internalize one's own abilities and accomplishments.

Incubation: A stage in the creative process in which the subconscious mind works on a problem or issue, seemingly without conscious effort.

Incubation Effect: The observed effect in which people are more creative when their brains are given a chance to work on a problem in the background.

Inner research: The process of exploring existing beliefs, knowledge, and feelings about a topic, in preparation for further research and writing.

Large Language Models (LLM): Generative artificial intelligence (AI) models trained on huge bodies of language. They can summarize and generate text in a way that seems eerily human.

Line editing: A line editor examines text for flow, clarity, readability, working at the sentence and wording level.

Metacognition: Thinking about thinking.

Mindset: A set of acting assumptions and attitudes that influence behavior.

Multitasking: Doing more than one thing at once. From a neuroscience perspective, multitasking is a mirage. In reality, you're switching your focus back and forth very quickly.

Muse: In this book, the Muse refers to the parts of the brain involved with inspiration, subconscious connections, and thought processes that happen outside of conscious control.

Negativity bias: The mental tendency to give negative thoughts or responses more mental weight and focus than neutral or positive ones.

Neuroplasticity: The brain's ability to reshape the way neurons connect and operate based on behavior. People once thought that brains stopped growing but researchers have found that we build the brains we need as we use them.

Open attention: A state in which the thinking mind wanders, without focusing on anything in particular. In open attention, the Muse has a chance to be heard. You may experience open attention when engaged in simple, everyday activities that require little directed focus.

Proofreading: The final stage of the editing and revision process. In book publishing, proofreading happens after the book interior is formatted. The proofreader checks not only for those persistent typos and grammatical issues but also formatting issues like strange page breaks or hyphenations, extra spaces, and other issues.

Resilience: The ability to recover from or adjust to negative occurrences and setbacks.

Scribe: This term refers to the mental systems that use deliberate, intentional thought, effort, and discipline. In times before the printing press, scribes performed the essential work of copying and writing books.

Servant authorship: A close relative to servant leadership, servant authorship is the practice of focusing on the reader and their needs when writing. (You won't find this in other glossaries, as I coined the term. But I hope it catches on!)

System 1 and System 2: Daniel Kahneman refers to these two systems in decision making. System 1 is intuitive and automatic, relying on shortcuts to save us the work of analysis. System 2 uses deliberate and intentional thought.

Zeigarnik Effect: The brain's tendency to reserve processing (memory) for unresolved issues: this contributes to incubation.