Creative Writing–
Quick Reference Guide

Planning Your Story
- Brainstorm freely - no idea is too small.
- Choose your entry point:
  - **Character-first**: Who's the story about?
  - **Plot-first**: What happens?
  - **Theme-first**: What's it *really* about?
- Ask the **What If?** question to spark possibilities.

Key Story Elements
- **Setting** – Where and when does the story happen?
- **Point of View** – Who's telling it? (1st, 3rd, etc.)
- **Conflict** – What stands in the way?

The Three Act Structure
Act 1: Setup – Introduce characters, setting, and the conflict (inciting incident). End with the critical question.

Act 2: Confrontation – Rising tension, obstacles, turning points. Challenges escalate; relationships deepen and includes turning points that shift the story's direction.

Act 3: Resolution – Where the protagonist faces the core conflict (climax) and reflects on lessons learned and personal growth (resolution). Climax, consequences, and emotional payoff.

Memoir endings highlight transformation rather than perfect solutions.

Characters
- Give each character a clear role and goal.
- Flaws make characters relatable.
- *Quote*: "In the end, all stories are about the people." – Isabel Allende

Show, Don't Tell
- Show through action, dialogue, and sensory details.
- Example:
  - Telling: She was nervous.
  - Showing: Her hands trembled as she fumbled with the key.
- *Quote*: "Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass." – Anton Chekhov

Choosing Strong Words
- Replace weak verbs/adverbs with strong verbs.
  - Weak: He ran quickly.
  - Strong: He sprinted.
- Choose precise nouns.
  - Vague: The thing on the desk.
  - Specific: The brass compass on the desk.

Avoid Overwriting
- Cut superfluous words.
  - Wordy: He sat down.
  - Tight: He sat.
  - Wordy: She nodded her head.
  - Tight: She nodded.

Editing & Feedback
- First draft = get it written.
- Second draft = make it clear.
- Seek constructive feedback — not just praise.
- Read aloud to catch awkward phrasing.
- *Quote*: "The first draft is just you telling yourself the story." – Terry Pratchett

Writing Exercise

Outline your story using the Three Acts:

— Beginning (setup, inciting incident)

— Middle (rising action, midpoint)

— End (climax, resolution).

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