

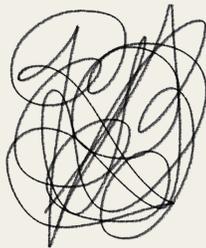
5 Prompts to Craft Your Unique Writing Angle

I've spent my career investigating what makes an angle work—first as a publicist pitching media, then as a magazine editor screening such pitches, and finally as an editor working with authors to craft their book-length concepts. The secret to standing out, I've found, is this: if content is king, the angle is queen. The angle is the most powerful force a writer possesses, providing a fresh frame for timeless truth beyond overdone, underdeveloped, dime-a-dozen concepts.

So what is an angle, exactly? At its simplest, your angle is your unique slant on how you see your subject matter, as written in your unique voice. As Emily Dickinson charges us, "Tell all the truth, but tell it slant."

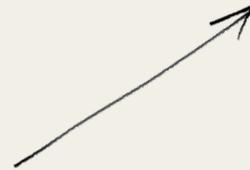
Telling it slant earns a reader's attention in a way they'll not soon forget. Let me show you what I mean.

"About" is amorphous, as an undefined topic.



vs.

An *angle* makes a declarative, directional statement.



Instead of...

- recycling and repeating something we already know
- stating the obvious and the expected, which is to say "end of story"
- a straight chronological account of events

An angle has the power to...

- surprise, revealing a fresh way of seeing and understanding
- spark our curiosity to know more
- go beyond "just the facts" to examine the deeper themes they signify

Discovering and bringing definition to your "slant" is a process. So I've designed five prompts to help writers like you get to the guts of what you have to say.

PROMPT #1 // Voice: what are the three words that best describe your unique writing voice?

Your voice is your power of human expression, as it belongs uniquely to you. Consider the themes, style, scope, and inflections of your writing. What patterns do you observe? What is the silver thread braided throughout everything you write? For example, is your writing wry, irreverent, and incisive? Or maybe it's punchy, empowering, and practical; or reflective, soulful, and poetic.

Whatever your top three, write them on a sticky note and keep it near your computer. This is your vocal range—the realm in which your writing will thrive, sounding the most like itself.

PROMPT #2 // Vision: what unique perspectives and life experiences do you bring to your themes?

Just as your voice offers unique expression, so does your vision—how you see the world, as informed by your story. No one else in the world has your precise vantage point—the sum of your lived experience, unique perspective, and hard-won wisdom you've gathered along the way. We all write out of the prism of our life experiences, which color every page. We become better writers when we are conscious of what those colors are, and how they can best illuminate the big idea we want to write about.

PROMPT #3 // Tension: where does it get complicated?

Just as every story has its stakes, every angle has its tensions. And tensions can be incredible teachers. Consider the struggle that sent you writing in the first place, then broaden this to consider your reader's experience: what would you say is the greatest struggle that will bring them to your work of writing? What's keeping them up at night? What's missing? Where does it hurt?

Where things get complicated is where things get interesting! The best kind of writing, the writing that gets downright spiritual, attends to paradox. So it's not an angle's job to conjure up a be-all, end-all ANSWER but rather to openly inventory the tensions inherent to your subject matter, fight an honest, nuanced way forward, and shed some fresh light on the journey.

PROMPT #4 // Transformation: what is the invitation of the journey?

Once you've inventoried the tensions you're exploring, the next question is: where do you go from here? What does the journey from tensions to transformation look like?

A really good way to get at this is to consider: what is your personal threshold moment, as it relates to your subject matter? What was the moment, the revelation, the discovery, or decision that marked the beginning of your personal transformation? Chances are, it stands to do the same for your reader. This is a story that ideally epitomizes your core tension, themes, and invitation forward. Tip: if you are willing to include this personal story in your writing, it can be a good way to show your reader you're in this journey with them.

PROMPT #5 // Bring It All Together: what is the boldest statement you have to make about your subject matter?

Finally, bring it all together. Consider your unique sense of voice and vision that you bring to your writing, the tensions you're exploring, the transformation you're seeking, and the journey between. Now that you have this panoramic view, how might you name such a journey? What is the truest, boldest statement you can offer to your reader, to invite them along? This isn't the time to hold back, play it safe, or bury your lede. Now is the time to go bold.

One of my best tips here: take your slant, and give it a superlative. The greatest, simplest, most overlooked, most powerful, the biggest difference, indeed, the boldest!

YOU GOT THIS!

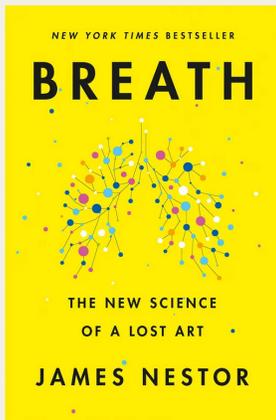
Do you see? You are already remarkably equipped for this work. You already have everything you need. From here, it's a matter of showing up and mining for the gold. As you do, may you encounter the joy that comes with finding new connections, and may your discoveries help you show up to that blank page and blinking cursor with newfound creative confidence.

Stay connected at SLANT LETTER for more tips + tools for your writing craft!

BONUS: Let's consider a few examples

What could have been a flat, self-evident “about”...

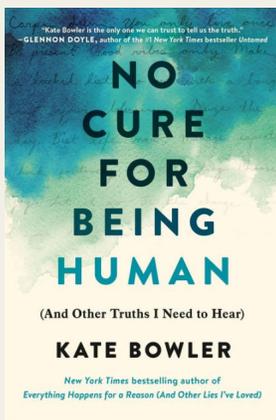
The author crafted into an intriguing, memorable angle...



Diaphragmatic breath



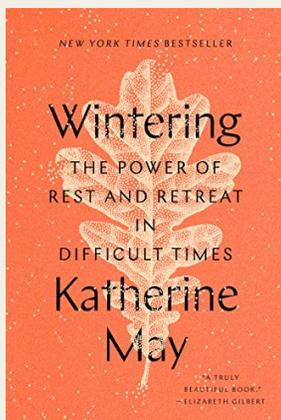
The missing pillar of modern health is the breath.



Loss of control, when life doesn't go as planned



While living your best life now might *sound* like good news, accepting the hard truth that we are only human—limitations and all—is a truer, freer way to live.



Difficult seasons in life



“We may never choose to winter, but we can choose *how*. . . one of the most important choices you’ll ever make.”