Writing a Psalm, a few hints

Get yourself in a thoughtful space where you can write comfortably, and won’t be disturbed.  You’ll need a notebook or journal. Lighting a candle as a prayer focus may help.

**Ask for God’s involvement**

Pray, asking God to speak to your heart in this time.  Allow God to shape you through His word.  Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

**Pick a Psalm** to use as a ‘model’ The length of the Psalm will affect how long this activity takes, so choose one that fits for the time you have.  Here are a few suggestions.

* [Psalm 3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%203&version=HCSB) – short. (Facing hard times and asking for God’s involvement)
* [Psalm 19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2019&version=HCSB) – medium. (Celebrating God and making confession.)
* [Psalm 40](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%2040&version=HCSB) – long. (Waiting for God and expressing faith in the time of waiting.)

### ****Read, deep read and reflect****

As a culture we have moved away from deep reading. We want things direct. Three bullet points. 140 characters. But that doesn’t work for scripture.  Scripture shapes us through exposure.  Reading for reflection is the goal.  That means reading the psalm you have chosen to concentrate on through several times slowly. Think about what the words mean. Think about the overall sense. (It it joyful? Is it sad? Is it more a tone of teaching or a tone of worship?) Then think about the characters involved. Who is speaking? What kind of person do they sound like? Who are they speaking to or about?  Don’t read like you’re reading a reference book. Don’t scan. Don’t speed read. Read each line. Pause. Let the words sink in. Then read the next line.

### ****Write your own Psalm****

Using your model Psalm as an example, have a go at writing your own psalm. Take it line by line, and let your theme shape the psalm. You can use the template of the Psalm to write your own prayer or song to God. But don’t get hung up on form.

### ****Pray your Psalm****

Once you have your own version written, pray it out to God. You now have something very precious – your own psalm.  Do this a few times and you’ll slowly develop your own book of eco-psalms. They can be used in your personal prayer, or as an offering in the worship of your church community

**General Info: HEBREW POETRY ELEMENTS YOU CAN USE**

Old Testament poetry doesn’t use rhyme and meter but does use poetry devices like imagery and wordplay. The three main types of ancient Hebrew poems are synonymous poetry*,*antithetical poetry andsynthetic poetry*.* Don’t let those names intimidate you, they’re easy to understand.

**Synonymous poetry** features two lines that say nearly the same thing, in order to drive a point across. See: Psalm 3:1 –

Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!

So for example, if you were writing a psalm calling on scientists involved in genetically modifying plants, you might say: Listen, you scientists.
Hear me, you gene-splicers.
Pay attention, all of you who alter the DNA of our food All three lines cry for the attention of those who are working on GM plants

**Antithetical poetry** is the opposite – it uses successive lines to say two different things, each relative to the same theme. You’ll not only find this in Psalms, but all over the Book of Proverbs, such as Proverbs 17:22 –

A cheerful heart is good like medicine,
But a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

So you might write:

The sight of your countryside delights my soul

But the wasteland drives my heart to cry

**Synthetic poetry** uses successive lines to build to a point, systematically showing or convincing the reader. Some of these passages can be long, like Psalm 139:1-6. Joel uses it several times in Joel 1:1-20, for example: Joel 1:11

Despair, you farmers.

Wail, you vine growers; Grieve for the wheat and barley, Because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

So you might write Cry out you dying oceans Shout aloud you thawing icecaps Call for justice for the starving polar bear and her cubs.