

WRITERS BLOCK

Break Out Strategies

Choose a Topic That Interests You

When a topic is boring, the task is unappealing. You might need to change the topic of your essay. Is there something else you would rather write about? If the choice is not yours, find an aspect of the topic that sparks your interest or passion.

Backtrack and Try Some Prewriting

You may feel pressured to get the paper done, but try taking some time to brainstorm ideas, make an outline, freewrite.

Start in the Middle

You can put things in order later. If you have an idea for a body paragraph, write it even if you haven't written your introduction. Work backwards. Don't put your entire paper on hold because you have trouble with one part of it.

Embrace the Ugly Draft

When it comes to drafting, there are no wrong answers. No one expects your argument to flow perfectly from your fingertips, and no one is grading your first draft. Go ahead: stop typing in the middle of a sentence. Use the close-but-not-quite word and move on. Ignore the typo in your title. In other words, worry about how it all sounds later. Once you get those rough ideas down on paper you have something to revise. Aim for a rough outline, but always remember that your first draft is not your final draft.

Talk it Out

We're so used to communicating through speech that you may find it easier to work your way through ideas in a conversation. *Our tutors at the CSU Stanislaus Writing Center are definitely willing to listen. Come on in and let us help you with your writing and alleviate some stress. We are located in the library.*

Have Fun

Write like you'd talk; loosen up your language. Draw pictures. Say the opposite of what you mean. Do anything to make yourself laugh and generate material. Fix it later.

Information on this handout borrowed from: *The Longwood Guide to Writing (Second Edition)* by Ronald F. Lunsford and Bill Bridges, *Strategies for College Writing (Second Edition)* by Jeanette Harris and Ann Moseley, and the Sam Houston Writing Center.

Advice from professional writers:

- *Ignore it: you never stop speaking; why stop writing?*
– Quentin Crisp
 - *Take a walk.* –Nancy Hathaway
 - *Read.* –Amy Wallace
 - *Try the element of surprise: attack it at an hour when it isn't expecting it.* –H.G. Wells
 - *Apply the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair.* –M.H. Vorse
 - *Write anything, anything at all that comes into your head.*
–Stephen Spender
 - *Pretend to be writing to an aunt.* –John Steinbeck
 - *Prescription for writer's block: Begin.* –Cynthia Ozick
 - *Feel panic at how quickly life slips by. Get to work.*
–Nicholson Baker
 - *You can't think yourself out of a writing block; you have to write yourself out of a thinking block.* –John Rogers
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