

Combating Writer's Block

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial investigates writer's block — something that all writers experience at times. In addition to a definition of writer's block, some of the methods used to prevent and overcome it are presented, including the writing process.

This tutorial addresses writer's block in three parts:

1. What Is Writer's Block?
2. Steps to Combat Writer's Block
3. The Writing Process and Writer's Block

1. What Is Writer's Block?

"Writer's block" is a catch-all term that describes a writer's inability to generate ideas, or to write at all. It is a common condition, one that occurs most often during the early stages of the writing process. All writers — new writers, experienced academic writers, creative writers, journalists, and others — encounter writer's block at some point.

Writers have discovered a number of ways around or through writer's block. This tutorial explains how the writing process, in addition to enabling writers to write better essays, can help them to overcome this difficulty.

2. Steps to Combat Writer's Block

Each step in the writing process can help writers to work through writer's block.

Brainstorming. Brainstorming helps writers to generate ideas. When you're having trouble beginning a writing project, brainstorming can clarify your thinking and enable you to break through whatever is holding you back. Brainstorming techniques can be used during any stage of the writing process to overcome writer's block.

Prewriting. Prewriting techniques, including outlining, can help to reduce uncertainty and insecurity when you are drafting.

Revisiting the Thesis. If prewriting techniques don't solve the problem, revisit and reconsider your thesis. Sometimes just writing it or saying it out loud can help you to clarify your goals for the writing project, and to remember or re-establish your focus.

Drafting. Drafts don't have to be perfect — especially the first draft. When you write a draft, remember that you'll return to it later to change whatever you find that needs changing. By keeping these things in mind, you can relieve the pressure you may have been feeling about what you've written.

Editing and Revising. Many beginning writers find that even during late stages of the writing process, they have a hard time starting their second, third, or even fourth review of a draft. Once you have a draft (or a partial draft), editing and revision techniques (including critical reading and analysis of your draft) can help you to generate new ideas, even during later stages of the writing process. If you've got time to revise, you've got time to create.

Proofreading. Sometimes proofreading (i.e., reviewing a draft for typos and sentence-level problems) enables writers to work productively on a draft while building the mental and emotional momentum needed for more substantial work. If you're stuck, try proofreading to get un-stuck.

3. The Writing Process and Writer's Block

When using the writing process to overcome writer's block, the best thing to do is to trust the process. The writing process has helped many writers — including beginning writers — to improve and streamline the way in which they complete writing projects. Whenever you experience writer's block, ask yourself: why shouldn't it help you, too?



BIG IDEA

Writers do not achieve perfection at any particular point in the writing process. However, if they continue to write according to the process, they will complete projects successfully and accomplish their goals.

It's important to remain flexible when writing. Writer's block often afflicts those who are too attached to an outline, a trajectory, or previously-collected research and ideas. The willingness to make adjustments as you work — to learn as you go — is a strength, even when it doesn't feel like one.



SUMMARY

This tutorial considered writer's block, and how the writing process can help writers — including beginning writers — to overcome it. By trusting the writing process and remaining flexible, long term writing goals can be accomplished.

Source: Adapted from Sophia Instructor Gavin McCall