

THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

at **Sam Houston**
STATE UNIVERSITY

Writer's Block

Whenever it strikes, writer's block can disrupt a writing project so thoroughly that never starting or starting over can seem like the best solution. Here are some thoughts on how to overcome a problem most writers face at some point.

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?

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, or freewrite. Check out our handout on prewriting to get some ideas.

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. Tutors are willing to listen.

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.

Other Tips for Overcoming Writer's Block

- Take a break. Working on the same assignment for a long stretch of time can wear anyone out.
- Spend some time with a different task or assignment. Do some reading for another class — or do the laundry. Sometimes we become frustrated when we have too much on our plate. Taking care of some of your other responsibilities might help you regain focus.
- Some people perform well under deadlines. If this sounds like you, consider setting deadlines for yourself when you get an assignment.
- Stay relaxed! There are steps you can take to overcome writer's block, and it is not the end of the world if you do not get your entire paper written in the next hour. Plan ahead to give yourself plenty of time to finish the assignment and reduce your stress while writing.
- Keep writer's block in mind when planning your schedule. The more time you have to work out ideas and problems, the better off you'll be.