



Tips for Writer's Block

A-State Online Writing Center

Writing anxiety, or writer's block, refers to when you feel anxious or negative about your writing capability. While this may seem similar to procrastination and can yield the same effect (delaying the writing process), it's rooted in apprehension, whereas procrastination can be a result of numerous circumstances.

Writing anxiety often appears with a particular assignment. You may feel confident about completing one assignment, but another makes you pause, so you try to hold off working on it; this can also happen with sending emails, writing reports, or any form of written content.

What are Common Causes Writing Anxiety?

While this varies by individual, some common reasons for writing anxiety include:

- Attempting a new type of assignment or form of writing
- New subject matter
- Writing a longer essay or report than you have in the past
- Feeling self-conscious because of former criticism
- Writing for a professor or audience that has been critical in the past
- Time constraints
- Disinterest or confusion over the assignment
- Unstructured amount of time (perhaps an assignment due at the end of the semester)
- Personal reasons that are affecting academic or professional performance

Overcoming Writing Anxiety

Identify Your Feelings

When a general negative feeling takes over, it's best to ask yourself how you're feeling and why. Do you feel anxious? Do you feel overwhelmed? Sometimes, getting outside and taking a break can clear your mind. Or maybe you need to call a friend, make yourself a good meal, or gain a good night's rest.

Look for Support

Talk to someone you trust about your writing; this can be a friend, family member, classmate, professor, Writing Center tutor, or colleague. Share your thoughts, ideas,

writing process, and work with them. They can potentially help you sort out your thoughts and frame the assignment from a different, helpful perspective. They may also clear up any confusion about the assignment or help you find key resources, or give you constructive feedback.

Recognize & Celebrate Your Strengths

Instead of focusing on what you think you can't do, focus on your strengths. You can even ask a trusted friend or colleague to help you generate positive characteristics. For instance, rather than saying, "I'm not a good writer" or "I can't write", you say phrases such as:

- "I'm observant and reflect that in my detailed writing."
- "I use strong descriptions."
- "My grammar is impeccable."
- "I can synthesize information from the classroom with texts well."
- "I'm a critical reader."
- "My writing is cohesive and succinct."

Remember that writing is a process, and all writers are continuous learners. With each assignment, you will go through different stages in the writing process and have multiple drafts.

General Tip & Suggestions

1. Ask your professor, tutors, and/or colleagues questions about the assignment; this can help generate ideas and clear up confusion on this type of writing. Questions may include: "What is the purpose of this assignment?"; "Who is the general audience?"; and "How do I begin?"
2. Search for multiple examples of this kind of writing, so you can see different approaches. Your professor should be able to recommend resources, or you can ask classmates or colleagues if they can share their writing and writing process.
3. Ask for feedback at different stages of the writing process, so you know you're on the right track.
4. Don't let setbacks or failures keep you from learning and moving forward. Everyone experiences them. Turn them into opportunities for growth.

Sources

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/writing-anxiety/>

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