



Writing Center
Academic Affairs

Writer's Block

The most promising method of overcoming writer's block is to figure out the cause of blocking and then address it. If you find yourself struggling with writer's block, try one of these strategies:

Set realistic goals

If you feel that goals are a necessity in your composing process, make sure that they are attainable. Pushing yourself to do too much during a certain amount of time can often trigger writer's block. If you become overwhelmed with a task, it is hard to write at all. To set realistic goals determine a timetable that works for you. If that means starting a project sooner so that you can break it up into smaller chunks over a longer time period, that's what you have to do.

Make notes

Writing down your thoughts about a subject before you begin composing not only gives you a chance to jot ideas down before you forget them but also provides a written plan that will aid you in developing the direction of your paragraphs. These preliminary notes should be written in a format that works best for you, whether it is a chart, box, drawing, web, or outline.

Take a break

Sometimes there is a reason your brain is saying "no", and the best thing you can do is just take a break. However, it is important to establish a date and/or time when you will continue writing. During the break, you should not think about writing. Rather, engage yourself in something enjoyable and unrelated that you find relaxing. In returning to the writing with a fresh perspective, you may find that your writer's block has vanished.

Free writing

If you believe that your writer's block may be caused by a dislike of the topic you are working on, put it aside and write something that you take pleasure in. Free writing can consist of writing about your memories, describing what is around you, or working on a

piece that you have previously set aside; you can even write about not knowing what to write about. After you have written something more pleasurable, perhaps your mind will be clearer, and you will find it easier to go back to the project with which you are having trouble.

WIRMI

When you find yourself stuck looking for a particular word or phrase, use the acronym WIRMI (What I Really Mean Is) and proceed saying your sentence the way you are thinking it. Then, continue writing the rest of the paper. When the paper is complete, go back and examine the section with which you were having trouble. Often, once you have an idea of what you mean, it is easier to perfect the phrasing. If you are still experiencing problems, use a thesaurus or talk with a tutor or friend.

Piecework

Many times, it is easier to start writing a paper from the middle rather than the beginning. Begin with a section that you feel confident about discussing. After you have acquired enough confidence, you can go back and smooth out other sections that might have been giving you trouble. Writing this way is perfectly fine because the reader will not be able to tell that the paper was written “out of order.”

Talk the paper

This method requires a partner who is willing to take some time to listen to you talk about your topic and whose goal is to aid you in beginning your writing. See [“Peer Review Tips”](#) for more information about working through an idea with a partner. This method is helpful because we generally feel more comfortable talking about a topic than writing about it. Rather than satisfying the terms of an assignment, talking through your topic can help you better understand both your topic and how you want to write your topic.

Work with a tutor

Sometimes, it helps to get another point of view. In addition to asking you probing and thought-provoking questions about your topic, tutors can answer your questions about brainstorming, organizing, formatting, developing a thesis and much more. If you would like to see a tutor, feel free to make an appointment or visit the UHCL Writing Center as a walk-in.