

Overcoming writer's block

Sometimes students experience writer's block. This can cause anxiety which in turn makes the writer even more anxious. The key is to break this cycle.

"Don't get it right, just get it written" – James Thurber

Tips for getting started

- Write/type some words that describe how you feel about the task, then about the topic.
- Give yourself two minutes to write/type any ideas as you think of them. Don't worry if it is not related to the topic, just get something on the page.
- Talk about the topic first, explaining what you have learnt to someone else. Record your conversation then write down these words for editing.
- If you notice you are feeling anxious or stressed, take a minute to focus on your breathing until you feel more relaxed.
- Aim to write/type only a small portion at first. This might be a couple of sentences or a short paragraph on the part of the assignment you feel most confident.
- Go back to your assignment plan and add more keywords, details or bullet points. Then on your plan, write/type a sentence beside one of these points. Transfer this to your blank page.
- Remind yourself the draft is for your eyes only and don't worry about grammar, spelling, and punctuation. No first draft is perfect – mistakes are allowed in early drafts.
- Make some doodles on the page if you don't like looking at a blank page – remember, you are in control of this process.
- Start with What I really mean is . . . , and then go back and fix your sentence later.

Material adapted from the following sources

Cottrell, S. (2013). The study skills handbook. London, England: Macmillan Press.

University of Illinois. (2013). Writing Tips: Strategies for overcoming writer's block. Retrieved from <http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/tips/writersblock/>

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