

Writer's Block: How to Pry Yourself Loose

The writing is piling up. Memos, program proposals, budget reports... The absolute *last* thing you need in the midst of it all is writer's block.

Unfortunately, writer's block hits us all at one point or another. That gut-wrenching, "Why can't I just WRITE?!" feeling when we stare at a blank computer screen in hopeless despair is very common. And, luckily, there are some easy methods that can help you snap out of it!



Shake Up Your Environment

Why do the best ideas come either when you're driving or in the shower? Could be that those are the times when your mind is most lucid due to a change of scenery. We need to shake up our environments in order to shake up our minds.

Changing environments can help you crash through writer's block. So...

- Take a break to write someplace else.
- Get outside!
- Jot notes on a pad of paper instead of staring at your computer screen.

Don't Be So Hard on Yourself

When writer's block kicks in, there's a tendency to start kicking yourself, too. What's wrong with you that you can't pound out a simple memo? Before your self-defeating talk goes any further, consider the following:

- Grammar and punctuation don't need to be present within a first draft. Just let the ideas loose! Sometimes a free-flowing stream of consciousness approach to writing can loosen you up just enough to bump writer's block out of the way.
- Write incomplete sentences at first. In his book *The Basics of Business Writing*, author Marty Stuckey suggests starting with sentences such as "The main thing about... is ..." and "This is important because..." You can fill in the complete thoughts later.

- Start right in the middle of your writing project or go directly to the end. That first paragraph can be a killer so, skip it altogether during the first draft.

Loosen the Load

A simple jostle can help you shake off writer's block. Try:

- Engaging in a creative, right-brained activity such as listening to music, drawing, or looking at different images and posters.
- Moving around by getting out of your chair, stretching to the sky, and then touching your toes.

Inspirational thunderbolts don't typically hit at the right moment. Sometimes, inspiration needs a nudge so that you can get past writer's block and get on with your day.

Use Incentives

Ah, "the reward system." You know what motivates you so, tap into it. Some methods to consider include:

- ▲ Challenge yourself to see what you can get done in 30 minutes. The adrenaline rush of competing against the clock may be just the push you need.
- ▲ Write with a peer. Talk briefly about your respective writing projects and then go off to your separate spaces to plunge in. Just knowing that someone else is writing at the same time as you are can provide positive support.
- ▲ And, yes, there's always the "when I finish this, I can..." method, too. Whether a game of racquetball or a Popsicle tempts you, use an appealing end reward as your incentive.