Writer’s Block

When people experience “writer’s block” they feel an inability to write. However, they are capable of writing. Writer’s block comes from a fear or anxiety of some aspect of writing, and, once the fear is identified, there are several strategies writers can use to become “unblocked.”

6 Causes of Writer’s Block and Strategies to Beat Them

1. **Cause:** Unrealistic expectations of yourself  
   **Strategies:**  
   - Recognize that even the most experienced writers have bad first drafts  
   - Don’t try to do everything at once  
   - Engage in the writing process – Prewrite, draft, revise, draft, revise, draft….

2. **Cause:** You feel like you have nothing to say  
   **Strategies:**  
   - Brainstorm and pre-write (use CLAS’s “Prewriting Techniques” handout)  
   - Talk to someone about the topic  
   - Do some research, make a list of things you find interesting

3. **Cause:** An unfamiliar form of writing  
   **Strategies:**  
   - Think of something you’re good at, the first time you did it, and how you improved  
   - Look at examples. Replicate the conventions (but not the content)

4. **Cause:** Fear of criticism  
   **Strategies:**  
   - Ask someone you feel comfortable with (or a tutor!) for feedback before turning it in  
   - Give yourself time to respond to feedback so you can write another draft  
   - Recognize and give yourself credit for things you’ve done well

5. **Cause:** Concerned about time  
   **Strategies:**  
   - Break the task into steps  
   - Set aside writing time in your schedule/calendar (use CLAS’s weekly schedule)  
   - Set yourself a timeline (use CLAS’s “Better To-Do List”)

6. **Cause:** You don’t understand the assignment  
   **Strategies:**  
   - Analyze the assignment in detail (use CLAS’s “Assignment Analysis” handout)  
   - Ask questions of your professor, TA, or classmates  
   - Look at examples

If these don’t work try…

- Changing where you write (library, home, coffee shop),  
- Changing how you write (pen, pencil, computer),  
- Writing anything at all (journal, poem, short story) just to get the writing juices flowing