

## 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. Once the fear causing the problem is identified, there are several strategies writers can use to become "unblocked."

### 6 Causes of Writer's Block and Strategies to Beat Them

Causes	Strategies
Unrealistic expectations of yourself ("perfectionist")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize that even the most experienced writers have bad first drafts. (As Ernest Hemingway said, "The first draft of anything is shit.")</li> <li>Don't try to do everything at once. (Don't edit while you draft.)</li> <li>Engage in the writing <i>process</i>: Prewrite, draft, revise, draft, revise, draft....</li> </ul>
You feel like you have nothing to say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorm and pre-write (use CLAS's "Prewriting Techniques" handout).</li> <li>Talk to someone—a friend, tutor, or TA—about the topic.</li> <li>Do some research and make a list of things you find interesting.</li> </ul>
An unfamiliar form of writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think of something you're good at, the first time you did it, and how you improved. Try to apply those same strategies and mindset.</li> <li>Look at examples. Replicate the conventions (but not the content).</li> <li>Refer to the assignment sheet often and discuss concerns with your grader.</li> </ul>
Fear of criticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask someone you feel comfortable with (like a CLAS tutor!) for feedback before turning it in.</li> <li>Give yourself time to respond to feedback so you can write another draft.</li> <li>Recognize and give yourself credit for things you've done well.</li> </ul>
Concerned about time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Break the task into steps and set yourself a timeline for accomplishing them.</li> <li>Set aside writing time in your schedule/calendar (use CLAS's Weekly Schedule).</li> </ul>
You don't understand the assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze the assignment in detail (use CLAS's "Assignment Analysis" handout).</li> <li>Ask questions of your professor, TA, or classmates.</li> <li>Look at examples.</li> </ul>
If these don't work, try...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changing where you write (library, home, coffee shop),</li> <li>changing how you write (pen, pencil, computer), or</li> <li>writing anything at all (journal, poem, short story) just to get the writing juices flowing.</li> </ul>