

# Curing “Writer’s Block”

## (Or Things to Try When You Just Can’t Write)

“Writer’s Block” is a phrase used to describe the inability of writers to get words on a page. It happens to every writer at some point; the words are somehow *blocked* from the *writer*. Each writer is different; people use different methods to move past this state. Below are possible methods that should be helpful, along with some advice and strategies that can be used no matter which method you try.

### Methods

- Try free writing, or writing without editing.
- Use brainstorming (mapping, outlining, or listing ideas) techniques.
- Use note cards to separate ideas. Make up your own system – whatever works best for you, not what works for someone else.
- Go back and forth between generating writing and editing your writing. Focus solely on getting the words on the paper, then focus solely on making the words make sense. Rinse and Repeat.
- In the same way, go back and forth between generating words (saying things) and generating ideas (what you want to say). Start with one (which one doesn’t matter), then go to the other. Rinse and Repeat.

### Strategies

- Abandon your first draft for a few days (or even a few hours) and start fresh after you've been away from it. Your writing will look different after some time has passed.
- Let yourself write what you feel. Once you’ve gotten it down, you can make it work in your writing or take it out.
- Give yourself deadlines. Desperation often silences your inner editor.
- Cut out wordy phrases. Say what you mean.

### Advice

- Follow your instincts. They are usually right.
- Remember: there is no right or wrong way to write.
- Try not to be disappointed with what you do write. Just like athletes, writers have to exercise their writing “muscles” to get better, and sometimes that means writing work that isn't your absolute best.
- Don't be afraid to write “stupid” ideas. Just because you write (or type) them doesn't mean you have to turn that in, and sometimes you need to write it to get it out of your head.
- Don't mistake editing for writing. Writing comes first; editing comes last.
- Improvement in writing takes *time*. Again, don't be disappointed if you don't see immediate improvement.
- Don't rush. Even the best writers need time in order to write something good.
- Read. Read a lot. The best way to learn how to write is to see writing used.

Some suggestions on this page are taken from the following:  
Elbow, Peter. *Writing Without Teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973. Print.

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