



## WRITING CENTER

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### Tips for Coping with Writer's Block

Before anyone can begin to deal with the phenomenon that is writer's block, a simple understanding of it is needed. First of all, writer's block is not limited to writers, but can be seen in anyone who seeks to bring a creative project or idea to life.

A violinist practicing for a major performance becomes frustrated during the week before. They have rehearsed and rehearsed until they know the piece by heart, and yet they still find something wrong with their ability. A painter sits staring at a blank canvas, brush in hand, an image before their eyes, but their mind clouded and lacking inspiration. A brilliant physicist wracks their brain for the reasoning behind a cosmic phenomenon, with the mathematics of the event and the solution to their equation just out of reach.

*Writer's Block is the popularized term for a **creative funk**.*

#### Tips for Coping

- ❖ Walk away from the project for a little while
  - If the words are simply not coming to you, that is your clue that you have been working on the piece for too long or too intensely, and have developed a kind of literary tunnel vision.
- ❖ Work on a different project
  - If you have something else on the back burner, it might be helpful to switch gears and work on that for a little while.
- ❖ Do something else to free your thoughts:
  - Exercise
  - Take a walk
  - Play a video game
  - Get some ice cream
  - Take a nap (fresh eyes and a refreshed mind are beautiful tools)
  - Watch TV
  - Read a book
  - Mess around on the internet
  - Play with your pet
  - Go for a drive
  - Do some chores you've been putting off
  - Watch a movie

- Whatever works for you

*What do I do if I have writer's block but haven't started writing anything yet?*

One of the major hurdles in writing (or really in any project) is actually getting the thing started. Whether it's nailing down a thesis, writing the introductory paragraph, or simply thinking of a good hook, the hardest step is often the first.

The key to this is to **not think too much**. Write words on the page; the first thing that enters your head should be the first sentence, no matter how cliché or cheesy, because **the revision process is your friend**. Hindsight is really a good tool in this situation, and once you have something on the page, you can look at it later and probably think of something better.

There are a few things you might try to help you get those first words down:

Write them by hand. Most people these days think of writing as typing, but there's a lot to be said for good, old-fashioned pen and paper. Changing the format of your writing can help it feel less formal and take some of the pressure off by reminding you that these don't have to be your best words ever.

Use talk-to-text. Set your phone or another recording device to record your speech as words in a Note, and just start saying what you want to say—literally. Don't worry about any "ums" or bad grammar; you'll clean up the text later.

Cover your computer screen while you type. If you can't see it, you can't tell if you've made any typos and you can't go back to edit as you draft. Just let your fingers walk your thoughts out, and fix it up when you're done.

If your problem falls more along the lines of simply sitting down and concentrating on what you're doing, find some music. We suggest something instrumental (no vocals you can understand) with a tone that matches the tone of what's being written.

Still having trouble? Revisit something (a story, image, idea/concept, piece of music, etc.) that initially inspired you. It could spark that light again!

And if all else fails?  
Make an appointment with the Writing Center!  
Library, Room 311/312  
[www.bradley.edu/writeright](http://www.bradley.edu/writeright)