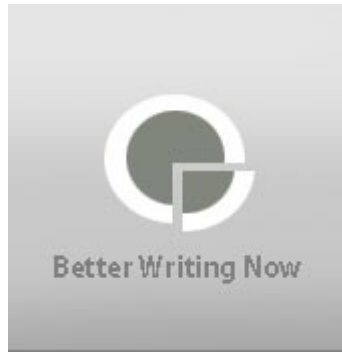


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The Better Writing Now Toolkit — Secrets & Strategies for
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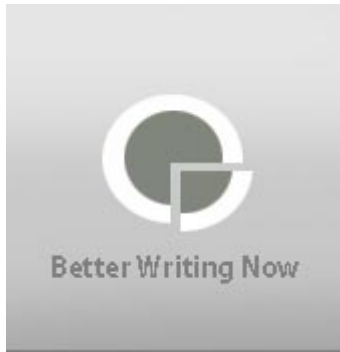
The Better Writing Now Toolkit

Secrets and Strategies for Powerful Writing

**Dawn Josephson
The Master Writing Coach™**

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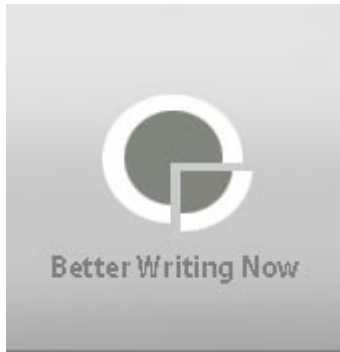
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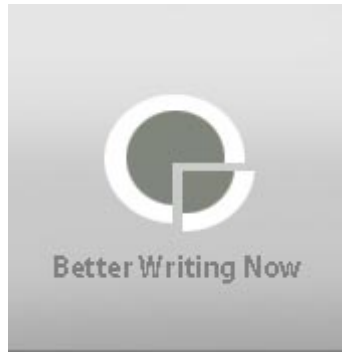


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Segment One

How to Easily Overcome “Writer’s Block”

It’s 9:00 a.m., and you’re staring at your blank computer screen. The next thing you know, it’s 9:25 a.m., and you’re still staring at the same blank screen. That little blinking cursor is taunting you to write something profound. You know the subject you are writing about. You just can’t seem to transfer the thoughts in your head down onto the paper. You have officially encountered “writer’s block.”

Ask any writer and they’ll tell you that writer’s block is a very real and major challenge. At least with other writing challenges, like grammatical or organizational problems, you have something to work with. Writer’s block is much tougher because you can’t tweak “nothing” into perfection.

Writer’s block can happen to anyone, whether you’re an experienced writer with many published pieces to your credit, or a first-timer trying to break into the writing world. Fortunately, you *can* unlock your mind and begin writing.

Don’t let writer’s block paralyze you! With some creativity, you can transfer the great ideas in your head onto paper. The following tips will help you avoid writer’s block and start writing your masterpiece.

1. Give Yourself Permission to Write Garbage

Most professional writers who have successfully overcome writer's block will tell you that they write garbage every single day. Give yourself permission to do the same. Just because you put some "garbage" down on paper doesn't mean it will stay there forever. The goal is to just get something—anything—out of your head. No one else ever needs to see it. But when you do write this "garbage" down, it will generate new thoughts, and you will be able to turn the "garbage" into something worth keeping. Most important, you will no longer fear the blank screen.

To start writing "garbage," just write down the first thing that comes to mind. Make it a stream of consciousness. Once you've finished, re-read your writing. Chances are you will be inspired with new ideas on how to better express your thoughts.

Another trick is to start a "garbage" file. Every time you write something, save it, no matter how awful you think it is. The next time you encounter writer's block, re-read some of the documents in your garbage file. It may spawn some new ideas. And remember, just because you considered something "garbage" in the past, you might now consider it to be recyclable. A piece of writing may not have been usable for you before, but now it may work perfectly for you.

In addition to your garbage file, keep a "treasure" file. Start collecting pieces of writing that you admire, whether it's a magazine or newspaper article, or even a sales letter that's particularly well-written. The next time you get struck with writer's block, look through your treasure file. Read over the material you loved and pay particular attention to its style. Since it will be fresh in your head, you'll be able to easily emulate the style.

2. Change Your Perspective (or write from your dog's point of view)

Sometimes authors get so close to their work that they paralyze their own writing efforts. Perhaps they fear they're not totally qualified to write on their current topic, or maybe they feel their writing skills aren't up to par and they will make too many mistakes, or maybe they just know so much about a topic they don't know how to narrow it down. Relax! You should also come to grips with the fact that no one is perfect. Your writing should be as error-free as possible, but realize that even great writers sometimes make mistakes. Take the pressure off yourself. If you still are plagued with self-doubt, try this exercise:

Change the perspective from which you are writing. Pretend you're a child, or your dog, or a fly on the wall. What would each of them think and write about your topic? Let your creativity run rampant and set yourself free *from* yourself.

Think of yourself as an actor. Just as you yourself would never tell someone to shut up, a character you play might. Let yourself assume a different role. It doesn't even have to be a person. What would a chair say if it could talk? Something like, "Hey, don't sit on me with that big butt of yours!" Think creatively. Get out of your own persona so you can truly see it from another perspective.

Try speaking from the point of view of someone you dislike, like your mother-in-law or your third grade teacher who told you you'd never amount to anything. Assuming the mindset of a person you dislike can spawn much creativity because you're not afraid to get outrageous in that persona.

Exercise:

Think of an activity you do every day, such as brushing your teeth or preparing your breakfast. Describe yourself doing that same scenario from three different perspectives: a dog, an inanimate object in the room, and from someone you dislike. Notice how each perspective spawns new material.

Activity: _____

Dog perspective:

Inanimate object perspective:

Someone you dislike perspective:

3. Create an Outline

Sometimes writer's block occurs because you don't know what you want to write for the beginning of your piece. To combat this, write an outline. Remember back to your early school days when you were instructed to first take notes, then create an outline, then write a rough draft, and finally create your final draft? There's a reason for this. If you know what points you want to hit in your writing and the order of your ideas, you will find it much easier to produce a logical, flowing piece.

Don't be scared away by the pressure to follow the traditional Roman numeral outline. Your outline can be any form of abbreviated writing that hits on the points and order you want your writing to have. Some people may write a summary paragraph, some people may write an outline using bullet points, and others may use a mind map diagram. You can even make up your own system. Once you have your outline, you'll have an easy guide to follow for your writing.

Exercise:

In the space below, outline the everyday activity you just described. Use this exercise to help determine your preferred outline style.

4. Tape Record Your Ideas

Some days writing anything at all seems near impossible. But chances are that even if you are struggling to write about your topic, you could explain it to someone. So go ahead and do precisely that. Pull out a tape recorder, hit record, and explain your ideas on tape just as you would to a friend. After you speak about your topic, you will find that you have released some pressure from yourself. Your mind is relaxed and the writing comes easier. And, in the worst-case scenario, you can always transcribe your tape to put the words on the screen and work from there.

Another idea is to play back the tape for others and ask them if they have an idea for a starting point. Or, after you play it back for people, ask them to interview you. The questions they may have about your writing topic may spark an idea for a starting point.

5. Write Paragraphs or Sections Out of Order and Then Bridge Them Together

Who says you have to write the introduction of your piece first? If you can't seem to string a sentence together that makes sense for your intro, move on to some other part of your piece. What's in your head right now? Is it the ending? Is it the points that will form the supporting paragraphs in the body of the piece? Write whatever is in your head right now. The rest of it will come together in time.

Write random paragraphs out of order and then string them together later. Listen to what your mind and body are telling you to write at that moment and then worry about putting everything into a logical order when you're done. You may come up with a brilliant beginning, but find it doesn't fit with the rest of your piece. This is another opportunity to go back to your garbage file and recycle something you've previously written.

6. Draw a Picture of the Scene You're Trying to Write

Sketching out your ideas is another great way to overcome writer's block. You'll be able to tap into another creative part of your brain and will spark ideas of what you want to put on paper. If you are a "visual" person, draw a picture of the scene you're trying to write about. When you've completed it, write an explanation of the scene.

Full Steam Ahead!

Writer's block doesn't need to thwart your writing efforts. By following the above exercises, you will be able to begin writing the well-written piece that's in your head. The most important thing to remember is to just start writing. You may need to "think outside the box" to jump-start the writing process. You can do this by changing your point of view, or simply writing the first thing about your topic that comes to mind. Once you start writing, your creativity will come through, and your blank computer screen will be replaced with writing that is logical, creative, and, best of all, interesting to your reader.

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