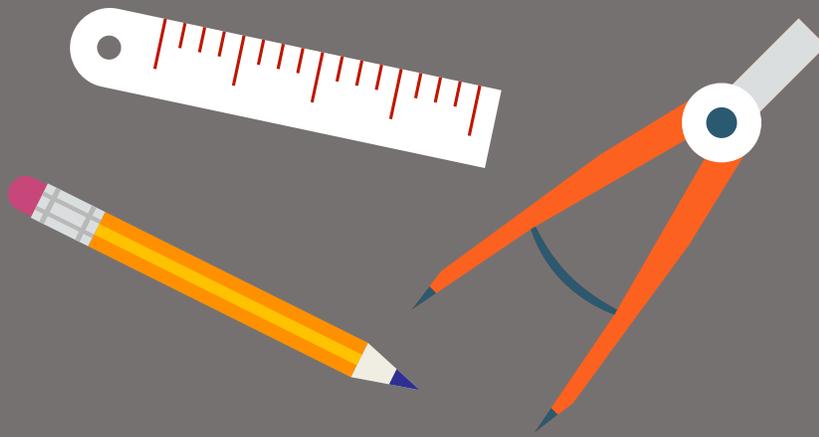


10 Strategies to Fight Through Writer's Block



PRACTICAL TOOLS

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Even the most prolific and accomplished writers will face something called "writer's block" from time to time. You might know what you need to say but are unsure how to say it or even how to start. Sometimes, coming up just with the first sentence is the hardest part.

There are ways you can break through writer's block, or even avoid it altogether. The methods are varied, but all of them can help you get un-blocked.

1. Write the headline first

Approach it like a news story, asking yourself: "If I were reporting on this information, what would be the main thing I'd want people to know? What's the second most important thing?" Coming up with a headline and a subhead or lead-in paragraph helps you sum up the angle you're trying to get across.

2. Make an outline

No need for pages of Roman numerals and a, b, and c: Just jot the major points you need to make in bullet form to use as a guide when writing.

3. Write it wrong

At this stage, don't worry about spacing, typos, spelling or any edits that can come later.

The sole purpose at the outset is to write down what you need to say, not to get stuck on perfection. Don't worry about usage or other fixes you can clean up later when you read it over.

4. Just dive in

Take 10 to 20 minutes or so (you set the time amount) to write nonstop.

Use your outline if it helps but keep writing, even if you rewrite the same sentences a few different ways. Some of what you write won't be useable, but at least you're off and running.

The simple process of continuous writing will help you gather and clarify your thoughts.

5. Read it out loud

If you're drawing a blank at how to begin the first sentence, say what you need to say out loud.

Pretend you're having a conversation with someone about the information rather than writing it down.

Most likely the idea for what to write will be very similar but expressed in a cleaner, more thoughtful way. How would you say it? Whatever you come up with, write it down.

6. Get rid of the blank screen

Rather than peck away at your computer, grab a pen and lined paper and jot down your thoughts and ideas free-form style.

Writing rather than typing can boost creative juices because it takes longer to write, so you get more thought behind what you're putting down.

You can also just cross out mistakes rather than having to constantly backspace.

7. Read something similar

For instance, if you're working on a memo to explain department responsibility shifts, look back and see if you've gotten a similar memo in the past and what was stated and how. Did it include the same kind of information?

It can help to have at least a partial example to go on before you organize your own thoughts.

8. Do some research

The Internet is full of pointers on how to say something that's hard to explain.

A quick glance can at least spark a few ideas on how to go about starting your writing. Even reading published reports on a similar topic – say, for example, an online article about employee retention in mid-sized companies – can help you think of ways to discuss hiring or recruiting in a corporate memo.

9. Switch readers

Sometimes writing is hard because you know the intended reader may not be receptive or might disagree with whatever information you're sharing.

So write your first draft as if you're writing to someone who would be open or impartial to what you're saying.

Keep it straight and simple. This at least gets your main points on paper, and you can adjust your tone when you rewrite.

10. Pick a card

If you're stuck on the order in which to present your points, get a few index cards and write down one idea per card, then choose them in no particular order. Don't worry about the sequence yet.

Once your ideas are on the cards, visualizing them one behind the other could spark an idea of how to arrange them.

And getting them all down on paper can also clarify what should go first, second, third and so on.