

How to Vanquish Writer's Block

By J. Awadalla

Writer's block is something every writer experiences at least once in their writing career. You start out bursting at the seams with ideas to write about, but once you run out of ideas—or get sick of them—you don't know what to write next. What do you do?

If you've been writing for a while, the first thing you should do is stop. Step back, take a break, and stop yourself from writing for a while. Give your brain a chance to think of other matters for a while.

Oftentimes, you'll find that you randomly come up with more ideas once you've stepped back for a bit.

If you're truly stuck, however, sit down and ask yourself: why are you stuck? Maybe it's because you can't think of what to do next. Perhaps it's because you don't have enough information on a concept to continue. Maybe it's noisy where you are writing—distractions can cause you to lose your train of thought in no time. Once you know why you're stuck, you can then start getting yourself unstuck.

Much of writer's block is caused by a lack of organization, and that's fine. Sometimes thoughts just come out of nowhere and you need to write them down. Take the time to organize your thoughts with an outline or mind map before you begin writing. If the work in question is brief, you can plan it out on the same page you're writing on by making subheadings with key points. Without some sort of direction, your story can wind up aimless and nonsensical unless you already have a clear idea of what you want to write.

If it's a plot issue, try consulting the experts. Read your favorite authors, read some classical authors, just read something that is similar to what you are writing. It will more than likely give you at least one good idea of what you can do with your work next. You might also learn some new vocabulary to use while you're writing it.

If you lack expertise on a concept your story relies on, then research, research, research. I personally do this all the time, especially when I'm not knowledgeable on a piece's subject matter. If you're using online resources for your research, don't stop at Wikipedia. Do a full-on Google search and pull up the first ten relevant webpages you find and compare them. You would be surprised how many different opinions there can be on the same thing. Also consider researching the matter at your local library. Not all information can be found online.

If you're just having a hard time coming up with ideas, generating them depends on what you are writing. If you are writing fiction, some writing prompts might help. A simple Google search is sure to turn up thousands of clever prompts and can be exceptionally helpful, even if they aren't related to your story. If you are writing a more factual piece, let the facts themselves guide you. If you keep asking yourself why something is, you are certain to find more ground to cover and more information to make your piece more interesting.

Most importantly, just write. Don't worry about word counts or special formats until after you've completed your thought. Once you have your ideas in front of your eyes, putting the piece together becomes exponentially easier, as it's usually a matter of arrangement and fine-tuning. No matter what you do, don't give up.

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