

WORKING THROUGH WRITER'S BLOCK: GETTING UNSTUCK

If you can't get started on a first draft or struggle to draft more than a few words, you may have writer's block. Some cases arise from anxieties about school and its pressures; if that sounds like you, consider seeing a counselor. But most cases have causes that you can address.

1. **You may be stuck because you have no goals or goals that are too high.** Set goals that are small and achievable. Then create a routine that helps you achieve them.
2. **You may feel so overwhelmed by the project that you don't know where to begin.** If so, break the process into small achievable tasks; then focus on doing one at a time.
3. **You may think that you have to make every sentence or paragraph perfect before you move on to the next one.** You don't. Tell yourself you're not writing a final draft but only sketching out some ideas, grit your teeth, then do some quick writing to get yourself started.

Quick Tip: Getting Unstuck

If you have problems like this with most of your writing, talk to your teacher. Teachers have worked with every kind of procrastinator and blocked writer and can tailor their advice to your problem.

On the other hand, some cases of writer's block are opportunities to let your ideas simmer in your subconscious while they combine and recombine into something new and surprising. If you're stuck *and* have time (another reason to start early), do something else for a day or two. Then return to the task to see if you can get back on track.