

# COMBATING WRITER'S BLOCK

Writer's block manifests itself differently in each person, as each person's motivation and inspiration work differently. This resource suggests techniques that may help you mitigate your unique case of writer's block and help you continue with your assignment.

Depending on your learning style(s), some strategies below will be more effective for you. Use discretion and your own self-knowledge to determine what strategies will serve you best.

## WORKING WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION AND TOPIC

- 1. Make a realistic schedule** - Start by planning out your time well. Give yourself enough time for each step of the writing process, and put the researching, brainstorming, outlining, rough drafting, revising, and editing steps on your calendar. This will help you avoid the stress of cramming at the last minute.
- 2. Make sure you understand the assignment prompt** – You may feel disconnected from writing your paper if you did not understand the professor's instructions or address the prompt's points in your paper.
  - a. Reread the instructions to make sure that you comprehend both the practical and content elements.
  - b. Be sure to ask your professor for clarification if needed.
  - c. Respond to every part of the prompt.
  - d. For more information, see our resource on [Understanding Assignment Prompts](#).
- 3. Consider what sources you will use in your paper** - If your paper requires academic sources, use the research process to learn and fully understand your topic. Research can also be your place of inspiration!
  - a. Grouping your sources together by their topic may give you an idea of what your sources have in common and what sorts of topics you should cover in your paper.
  - b. Make sure you read your sources thoroughly, as an understanding of your sources will help you understand your topic and what you should say.
  - c. Once you have read your sources, use the knowledge you gain from them to properly outline your paper.
- 4. Utilize your paper's outline** – Take the time to create an outline for your paper, paying attention to making sure it has a logical and organized structure.
  - a. Create your outline so that it flows logically and addresses each part of your professor's prompt. This will guide your paper's structure and your writing process.

- b. Each part of your paper should serve a particular purpose. Your outline will help you see what you need to address in the paper and whether you have accomplished that.
  - c. As you write, ensure your paper's sections follow your outline's plan. If any parts are missing, use your outline to determine what you should write next.
  - d. For help with deciding what outline structure is best for your paper, see our resources on [Academic Summaries](#), [Five-Paragraph Essays](#), [Narrative Papers](#), and [Research Papers](#).
5. **Polish your thesis statement** - Constructing a thesis statement will allow you to put the central concept of your paper in a succinct package. You can use this statement to keep your focus during the writing process. For more information on how to write a thesis statement, see our [Thesis Statements](#) resource and [tutorial video](#).
  6. **Consider a new topic for your paper** - If the prompt allows you to select a topic, consider changing topics to something that may be easier or more interesting to research and write about. It may be that your first topic is a poor fit for you or hard to realistically write a paper on in the desired word count.

#### WHILE WRITING

1. **Change your scenery** - Sometimes moving to a different work environment will allow your brain to focus more sharply and increase productivity.
2. **Talk over your paper's structure out loud** - Talking aloud with another person or even to yourself will help you gain a fresh perspective. You may verbally process flaws or discover a new path forward. Additionally, read your paper aloud to help you spot grammar mistakes or logical inconsistencies.
3. **Clean up your paper** - Scan for any sections that are off-topic. Every part of your paper should serve a clear purpose. Where should the paper go next based on your thesis statement, your outline and what you have written so far?
4. **Take a break** - Even taking a short break can refresh your brain. Go for a walk or eat a healthy snack. Take time to take care of yourself and give your mind a break; then you can return with a new perspective.

**PRACTICE NOW**