

**STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH WRITING ANXIETY AND WRITER’S BLOCK**

The Writing Center handouts listed under “Resources” are available on the Writing Center website or can be picked up at the Writing Center.

People use the terms "writing anxiety" and "writer's block" to describe a variety of fearful and negative feelings around writing. These feelings may not occur every time you write. For example, you might feel perfectly fine writing an email to a friend but apprehensive about writing a paper about an article for school. In other words, writing anxiety and writers' block occur in some situations, but not *all* situations. Writing anxiety and writer’s block are not signs that someone is a “bad writer,” nor are they a permanent part of someone’s personality. People aren't born anxious or blocked writers; rather, they become anxious or blocked through negative or difficult experiences with writing. Thankfully, by assessing and adjusting your approach to writing, you can confront both the personal and practical causes of your anxiety.

Cause (Why do I feel anxious/blocked?)	Strategies (What can I do?)	Resources (What can I use? Who can help?)
Unrealistic expectations about the writing process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage the Process: Prewrite, Draft, &amp; Revise. There is no “correct” way to prewrite, draft, or revise. Experiment with different methods to determine what works for you.</li> <li>Don’t try to do everything at once.</li> <li>Allow yourself to make mistakes and learn as you go.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to a Writing Center tutor</li> <li>Use “The Writing Process, “Prewriting Strategies,” “Developing a Thesis Statement,” and “Self-editing Strategies” handouts available on the Writing Center On-line Library (OWL)</li> </ul>
Feeling like you have nothing to say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorming and Freewriting</li> <li>Talk about it</li> <li>Use templates or graphic organizers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to a classmate, friend, or family member</li> <li>Talk to a Writing Center tutor</li> <li>Graphic Organizers (<a href="https://bubbl.us/">https://bubbl.us/</a>)</li> </ul>
Adjusting to a new form of writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think of new writing situations as practice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize that learning (like writing) is a process.</li> <li>Remember that writing is a skill, and that skills require practice.</li> <li>Allow yourself to make mistakes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to a Writing Center tutor</li> <li>Look at example essays</li> <li>Practice</li> </ul>
Writing for a reader or readers who have been overly critical (or who you imagine will be)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify your strengths. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose at least one strength as your starting point. Instead of saying "I can't write," say "I am a writer who can ..."</li> </ul> </li> <li>Celebrate your success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to a Writing Center tutor</li> <li>Talk to a classmate, friend, or family member</li> </ul>
Time – too much or too little	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set aside times for writing when you are most relaxed or alert.</li> <li>Break the task into steps.</li> <li>Make a writing schedule and/or set goals.</li> <li>Use a calendar or draw an outline to visualize the time you’ll need.</li> <li>Experiment with different tools for time management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to a Writing Center tutor</li> <li>Assignment Calculators (<a href="http://library.rit.edu/researchguides/calculator/">http://library.rit.edu/researchguides/calculator/</a>)</li> <li>Timers</li> <li>Web-blocking software</li> </ul>
Responding to an assignment that seems difficult or unrelated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read the assignment with care and purpose: underline, highlight, and make notes when you have questions.</li> <li>Ask Questions.</li> <li>Look at Examples.</li> <li>Connect with resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to Instructor</li> <li>Talk to Tutors</li> <li>Course materials (course texts, syllabus)</li> <li><a href="#">Assignment Analysis handout</a></li> </ul>

Cause	Strategies	Resources
Dealing with troubling events or feelings outside of school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to someone who seems like they would be a good listener or supportive.</li> <li>• Connect with campus services</li> <li>• Write about what is troubling you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friend, family members, mentors</li> <li>• Counseling Services <a href="http://www.sbccc.edu/counselingservices/index.php">http://www.sbccc.edu/counselingservices/index.php</a></li> </ul>
Unknown cause or when nothing else works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get Creative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw a picture of your inner critic</li> <li>• Change your perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For example, try getting a “bird’s eye view” of your work: spread your pages out on the floor, stand up, and look down.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cut your paper into pieces and tape them to the wall</li> <li>• Experiment with using highlighters, crayons, markers, big pieces of paper...</li> <li>• Read your paper in the voice of your favorite movie star</li> <li>• Read your paper to your pet hamster 😊</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art supplies</li> <li>• Your imagination</li> </ul>

**Next Steps:** Use the space below to draft a plan for how you might deal with writing anxiety or writer’s block

Cause (Why do I feel anxious/blocked?)	Strategies (What can I do?)	Resource (What can I use? Who can help?)

Works Consulted

“Writing Anxiety” (<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/resources/handouts-demos/writing-the-paper/writing-anxiety>), The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

“Confronting Writing Anxiety” (<http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/web/writinganxiety.html>), Writing Center, University of Richmond