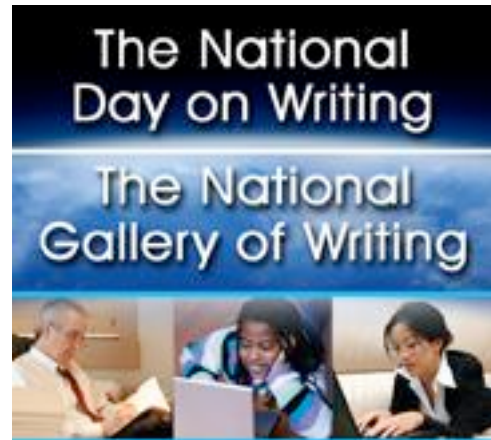


Getting Unstuck: Overcoming Writer's Block

Getting started with writing can be tricky. Sometimes just looking at a blank piece of paper or a blank screen seems to turn off all our ideas. On other writing occasions, a writer finds the beginning of writing going very well, but then somehow gets bogged down in the middle. In fact, sooner or later almost all writers get stuck. The good news is that writers can get unstuck, too!

There are several strategies for getting unstuck; some of them are listed below. Try one or more of them to see which ones are most helpful to you as a writer.



Make a List

A list of the points you want to make, the details you want to include, or an expression you want to quote helps you remember. Include the list next to you as you write so that you can refer to it. And if other ideas occur to you as you write, you can include them there.

Fill Up an Index Card

You might be stuck simply because the page or screen looks so large. Try filling up a small writing space—an index card or sticky note—to give you confidence. And write out from there.

Take a Break

Some writers try to complete a writing task in one sitting, when it might be more helpful to write at different moments. If you get stuck in the middle, take a break. Better yet, do something you like: take a walk, or get some ice cream. Then you can come back to the writing with fresh eyes.

Give Yourself a Direction

Sometimes you might get stuck in the middle or have to leave your writing to do something else. In both situations, do what Hemingway did: write yourself a note saying what you need to do next. Then, when you come back to your writing, your note-to-self will help you begin again.

Write in the Voice of Your Audience

Another way to get unstuck is to see it from another's eyes. What would your audience like to hear about next? On a separate card or sheet of paper, write in the voice of your audience and ask for what you'd like to hear. Write the response to this request, and you'll know where to go next.