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7 Secrets For Beating Writer's Block

By Shaun Fawcett

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Most people can easily identify with the dreaded "writer's block". It is a well-known phenomenon that just about everyone has faced at one point in their lives.

I used to suffer from writer's block, big time! Thus, I know through personal anguish and suffering, that it is definitely not a pleasant experience.

Especially when the due date for one's project or paper is getting closer by the day, and the boss asks you "how's that project going" every time you don't manage to avoid him/her when you're sneaking down the corridor.

WRITER'S BLOCK IS FEAR-BASED

Writer's block is a fear-based feeling. For whatever reason, many of us have this incredible fear of committing ourselves in writing whenever we are faced with a blank page or computer screen.

Fear no longer! I'm here to tell you that writer's block can be beaten!

Just realizing that writer's block is really an irrational fear that keeps us from putting pen to paper is half the battle. It's actually a fear of the unknown, often coupled with a fear of failure.

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We secretly wonder just what exactly is going to come out of this pen/keyboard, and when it does, will we be revealing some kind of incompetent idiot who doesn't know what they're talking about?

On the other hand, if we have done the proper preparation, our rational mind knows that we can do it just like we did it all of those other times before.

Unfortunately, fear often wins the day when it comes to writing.

As I stated above, I suffered from writer's block for many

years and it was not the most enjoyable of experiences.

THE 7 SECRETS

Fortunately, somewhere along the way I did manage to develop a few tricks to overcome writers block. Some are obvious, others are not.

Here are my personal hard-earned secrets for overcoming writer's block:

1. Don't Write Too Soon

Before trying to write, it is important to prepare mentally for a few hours or days (depending on the size of the task) by mulling the writing project over in the back of your mind. (Just as athletes don't like to peak too soon, writers shouldn't write too soon either!).

2. Do The Preparation

Read over whatever background material you have so that it is fresh in your mind. I read through all background material carefully marking important points with a yellow hi-liter and then review it all before I start to write.

3. Develop A Simple Outline

Before sitting down to write, put together a simple point form list of all of the key points you want to cover, and then organize them in the order in which you are going to

cover them. (I know, I know... your Grade 6 teacher told you the same thing... but it actually does work).

4. Keep research Documents Close By

When you sit down to write, make sure that all of your key background materials are spread out close at hand. This will allow you to quickly refer to them without interrupting the writing flow once you get going. I keep as many of the source documents as possible wide open, and within eyesight for quick and easy reference.

5. Just Start Writing

Yes, that's exactly what you do. Once you have prepared mentally and done your homework you are ready to write, even if your writer's block is saying "no". Just start writing any old thing that comes to mind. Go with the

natural flow. In no time at all you will get into a rhythm, and the words will just keep on flowing.

6. Don't Worry About The First Draft

Once the words start to flow, don't worry about making it perfect the first time. Remember, it's your first draft. You will be able to revise it later. The critical thing at the outset is to write those thoughts down as your mind dictates them to you.

7. Work From An Example

Get an actual sample of the type of document that you need to write. It could be something that you wrote previously, or it could be something from an old working file, or a clipping from a magazine article, or a sales brochure you picked up. As long as it is the same type of document that you are writing. Whatever it is, just post it up in your line-of-sight while you are working. You'll be amazed at how it helps the words and ideas flow. The main thing is to have an example to act as a sort of visual template.

In my experience this last one is the ultimate secret for overcoming writer's block.

To help with this, be on the lookout for good examples of writing that you may see in newspapers and magazines, and clip out the useful ones for future reference.

Shaun Fawcett is webmaster of writinghelp-central.com and author of the new eBook "Instant Home Writing Kit". His FREE e-mail COURSE "Tips and Tricks For Writing Success", offers valuable tips on home/business writing. Sign-up for FREE at: <http://www.instanthomewritingkit.com/free-course.html>

Thawing Your Writer's Block

By Mary Anne Hahn

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When I go through bouts of writer's block, my fingers stiffen, and my brain goes as blank as the snowy screen of a television on the fritz.

I don't know about you, but I picture writer's block as something cold—like the frozen engine of a car in the dead of winter, or the way your PC sometimes "freezes up" on you when your system gets too busy.

Looking at it that way actually helps to overcome it. Rather than feeling like you are grasping at fog, visualizing writer's block as something three-dimensional can provide you with both the strength to confront it, and the weapons to conquer it.

How can you thaw your writer's block of ice? Try any or all of the following:

1. Chip away at it. No need to write "War and Peace" in one sitting; Tolstoy certainly didn't. Fifteen minutes a day are all you need to give your writing dream some life and structure. Use them to write anything, anything at all—as many article ideas as you can think of, a synopsis of a story idea, a climactic scene in your novel, a limerick, a character sketch, step by step instructions for making the perfect omelet or what you would do if you won the lottery.

Have some fun with these 15-minute exercises, and you'll probably rediscover the truth in the adage that "time flies" when you do.

2. Light a match to it. By this I mean, don't think about the fact that you are not currently writing; rather, think about why you ever

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wanted to be a writer in the first place. Better yet, *write* about why you want to be a writer. Do you have stories burning inside you that need to be told? Or do you see writing as your key to personal fulfillment or freedom? Melt away writer's block by reigniting your passion for writing—the old daydreams, the past feelings of triumph or accomplishment when you finished a piece of work.

3. Carve a sculpture out of it. If you simply can't break it down or melt it away, make something from your writer's block of ice. As I did above, write about how you feel when you experience writer's

block, or what you think writer's block looks like. Maybe look for humor in it ("What did one writer's block say to the other?" "Nothing—it couldn't find the right words!" Okay, that's a bit lame, but you get the idea).

Whenever writer's block tries to come between you and your writing aspirations, don't try to avoid it. Instead, face it head on. Play with it, laugh at it, scoff at it, or befriend it. Make it something that you can take into your hands and deal with.

Turn it into one more tool that you can use to achieve your writing success.

Mary Anne Hahn is editor and publisher of "WriteSuccess," THE biweekly ezine of ideas, information and inspiration for writers. To subscribe, <mailto:writesuccess-subscribe@yahoogroups.com>



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