Strategies for Helping Students Overcome Writing Anxiety/
Writer’s Block/Getting Started Anxiety
DePauw University Writing Center, Dr. Susan Hahn

1. Free-Writing for Focused Free-Writing – (turn off the editor voice off)
2. Clustering
3. Brainstorming
4. Listing relevant quotes – Write Out, Cut Up, and Arrange
5. Outline ideas
6. Create a “temporary thesis”
7. Start in the middle
8. Write as if this was a “timed essay” (1/2-1 hour); this generates material to revise and edit
9. Use daily or weekly journal writing – respond to an article in the newspaper, or to an
   assignment – either as an free-writing or focused thesis.
10. Dialog journal – write in columns – have tutor respond
11. Have student write the paper on e-mail or using e-mail “voice”
12. Write the paper as a letter to a friend – keep the tone conversational (this is helpful for
   students who “freeze-up” when writing in an “academic” voice); they can even insert
   commentary: “Dear Mom, this is the kind of paper I hate to write because…”

General Principles

- Turn off “editor voice” until you have something written
- Generate ideas to write about – (use 1-5 above). It’s hard to write
  before you have enough ideas.
- Get something written as a starting point – you can edit later. It’s
  demoralizing to spend 1-2 hours in the library looking at a blank piece
  of paper.
- Dangle a carrot for yourself – “If I write for an hour, I can go do ____.”
  Work on positive reinforcement.
- Build writing “muscles.” Do free-writing or journal writing everyday.
  With practice, it gets easier.