

Strategies for Helping Students Overcome Writing Anxiety/ Writer's Block/Getting Started Anxiety

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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.