Overcoming Writer’s Block Study Sheet

Goals for this Study Sheet

In this study sheet we’ll be addressing some of the ways the writer’s block manifests itself, and how you can overcome it. We’ll talk about some of the possible causes, and solutions to those specific instances.

What is Writer's Block?

Traditionally, when referring to writer’s block, people are talking about when a writer loses their ability to produce new material or undergoes a decline in their capacity to create new content.

The fact is, is that writer’s block is much more complicated than that. It can manifest in many ways and each form will have a different solution. Since tackling this subject in all its variety would be outside the scope of this study sheet, we’re going to highlight a few of the most common variations you might face during your time in academia. (However it is important to note that because people and their writing processes are unique, finding the solution that works best for your given situation might be a topic worth further study.) Here are the most common variations of writer’s block that people come across:

You can’t come up with an idea

This is the kind where you literally have a blank page and you keep typing and erasing, or just staring at the screen until Twitter calls to you. You literally can’t even get started because you have no clue what to write about, or what story you want to tell. You’re stopped before you even start.

There are two pieces of good news for anyone in this situation:

1. Ideas are dime a dozen, and it’s not that hard to get the idea pump primed. Execution is the tricky part. This is the kind of creative stoppage where all of the

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typical “How to get over writer’s block,” advice can actually help. Some of this is dependant on the type of writing you are doing, (fiction, non-fiction, research, etc.) but will translate to most all types of writing.

2. There are very simple methods for encouraging the creation of new ideas. Try some of the following:

- Go for a walk.
- Eliminate distractions (Turning your phone off)
- Meditation.
- Do something to get your blood flowing.
- Change your environment.
- Read something new.

You have a ton of ideas but can’t commit to any of them

Now this is slightly harder. Even this problem can take a few different forms—there’s the ideas that you lose interest in after a few paragraphs, and then there’s the idea that you thought was a gold mine, but it’s actually a junkyard.

My own experience is that usually you end up having to throw all those ideas out. If they’re not getting any traction, they’re not getting any traction. Save them in a file, come back to them a year or ten later, and maybe you’ll suddenly know how to tackle them. You’ll have more experience and a different mindset then. It’s possible someone with more stubbornness could make one of those idea work right away, but probably not.

You have an outline but you can’t get through this one part of it

Some writers work really well with an outline, some don’t. For some writers, the point of having an outline is to have a road to drive off, a straight line to deviate from as far as possible. Plus, every project is different—even if you’re an outline fan usually, there’s always the possibility that you need to grope in the dark for this one particular assignment.
There are a few different reasons you could be getting stuck:

1. Your outline has a major flaw and you just won’t admit it.
2. You can’t get from A to C, because B makes no sense.
3. The logic of your structure isn’t tracking.
4. Your outline is basically fine, but there’s a part that you can’t get past. Either because it’s boring, irrelevant or confusing.

If any of these ring true for you, you probably already knew it, and it’s just a matter of attacking your outline with a hacksaw. Don’t be afraid of moving on to new ideas in replace of old ones. It’s easy to get attached to your unfinished content, but it’s necessary to developing the best version of what you’re trying to write.

**In Conclusion**

Writer’s block is nothing new. It’s affected almost all of us, including the greats. The important thing to remember is that action leads to thought, not the other way around. In order for you to have new ideas, you have to act. It’s easier to revise a quickly written full draft than it is to spend hours pondering three sentences in the hopes of perfection.