

The Writing Center @ KUMC

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Writing Anxiety & Writer's Block



What is writing anxiety?

Excessive worry? Uneasiness or agitation? Negative feelings? Yep. That's writing anxiety. It's a condition that has affected writers everywhere in all times. Usually, it has more to do with audience/purpose than writing itself. Here are just a few causes:

- Inexperience/Inefficiency
- Technical demands of a project
- Previous negative experience
- Lack of confidence/Fear of criticism
- Procrastination/Distant deadline
- Personal problems/Life events

What is writer's block?

In contrast to feeling uneasy about writing, writer's block is the inability to put words on paper. It's a paralysis of thought preceding the act of writing. (If you start writing and get stuck or start daydreaming, that's something a bit different, though related.) Writer's block can be temporary or decades long in duration. Whether stress (e.g., depression or grief) is causing cognitive dysfunction or perfectionism is stopping you in your tracks, the root cause must be identified and dealt with.

For both anxiety and blockage, there are ways to overcome or manage it:

- Reframe writing as a challenge rather than a threat
- Brainstorm alone or in a group and take good notes
- Write daily/regularly (if possible), get organized, and plan your campaign
- Reduce actual writing time but keep a routine religiously
- Don't read other texts and write at the same time; separate these activities
- Use visual sources of inspiration, e.g., art, nature, people
- Write in a "power place" as often as possible to ensure continuity/success

Finally, get support from fellow writers who listen well and give honest feedback. Be an active learner, not a passive participant. Gain new skills and trust the process.