FIRST TERM RESOURCE: GETTING STARTED — CURES FOR WRITER’S BLOCK

The first draft is often the hardest to write, so if you find yourself stuck with writer’s block, below are some tips for getting started on a draft and curing writer’s block:

1. **Relax.** The more you can relax, the better you will be able to get focused and make progress with your writing. Practice relaxing by taking deep breaths and commit yourself to the writing process.

2. **Just write.** If you are stuck, put your head down and let writing happen. Don’t worry about spelling or grammar or anything except putting words down on the page.

3. **Brainstorm.** Record, in grocery-list fashion, random thoughts on a particular topic as quickly as possible. Some of what you record may be full sentences and other content may be in fragments. Try to record whatever comes to mind as quickly as possible and without censoring yourself.

4. **Outline.** Record the major ideas, the big points, and organize them in a logical manner. Don’t worry about Roman numerals and proper spacing or anything like that. Instead, just focus on the ideas and the relationship of one to another.

5. **Know Your Purpose & Audience.** Give some thought to the writing assignment and then make sure your purpose and audience are clear in your mind before getting started.

6. **Conduct Research.** The more you know about a topic, the easier it is to write about it.

7. **Jump-write.** Try thinking about the writing assignment in small chunks and jump-write. How does this work? What is one point you want to make in the paper? Start there and see if you can make some headway. If you can, great! If you can’t, go on to the next point and see what happens. No rule exists that says a paper has to be written start to end. Jump around!

8. **Forget About Introductions & Conclusions.** While many are taught to write the introduction and conclusion first, this approach does not work for everyone. For some, writing the introduction and conclusion are much easier once the body of the paper is written.

9. **State your Thesis Out Loud.** Take this test: State your thesis aloud. If you fumble through this or can’t do it at all, take some time to think about what you are trying to accomplish in a piece of writing.

10. **Talk to Someone.** If you are stuck, grab a friend, a relative, a tutor, your instructor, or anyone willing to listen and use that person as a sounding board. Often expressing your ideas out loud enables one to sort things out and see new inroads for writing.

[Click here to talk with a tutor about this topic.]