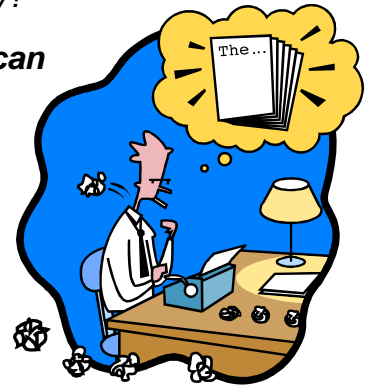


# Learning Café Quick Study Tips

## GETTING OVER WRITER'S BLOCK

*Why does my mind go blank when I have to write an essay?*

***Here are some common causes & some solutions you can try.***



### **I don't think I have anything worthwhile to say.**

- Find a subject you care about – but not one that raises a lot of anxiety for you. If you have 2 or 3 possibilities & you can't decide, write each topic on a piece of paper, toss them into a baseball cap, & pick one. Then go with it.
- Take time to think about the subject, to read up on it, & to talk to others about what they think. Use pre-writing skills like journaling & brainstorming to explore possible ideas. Ask someone else what they see in the subject.
- Ask yourself: "What do I really think about this? What do others think about this?" If you have read about a subject, thought about it & talked to others about it, your written report on all this mental activity is worthwhile. That's what your instructor is after – evidence that you done these things.
- Imagine yourself talking to a friend. Keep asking that friend questions about your subject & then imagine what that friend would answer. Sounds crazy, but it works.

### **I'm afraid to start because I know I'm not very good at writing. I'm afraid I won't be able to do it right.**

- Ask your instructor to clarify anything about the assignment that is unclear.
- Ask your instructor or a Learning Café instructor if he/she has a good example you may look at, but be sure to remember it's just an example & that yours will be somewhat different because your topic is different.
- Find a quiet spot. Concentrate on the subject & just write. Do not think about grammar, spelling or the requirements of the assignment – just write. Don't worry about the finished product at all. Relax & clear your mind of worries. Later you can make sure that what you've written fits the assignment & you can clean up your work. Trying to do all three things at once is like trying to dry a dish & put it away while you're washing it.
- Once you have some ideas down, even if it's just a list, come to the Learning Café to have a writing instructor help you sort out what's useful & what isn't. If your instructor offers to give feedback on your paper before it's due, start early & get all the feedback you can.

**I have received too many negative comments & had too many bad experiences connected with writing. I don't want more of the same.**

- Remind yourself that you are not the person you used to be & that your current instructor is not the same person who cut up your confidence in your writing ability in the past. Remember that completing the assignment is a step towards reaching your goal. Being scared is OK – you can still do the job.

**I don't want my instructor or other readers to know too much about me.**

- Remember, you do not have to disclose anything that you do not wish others to know. Choose a topic that does not create a lot of emotions for you. Even if you have to write a personal essay, you can leave out experiences that make you uncomfortable. Who will know?

**I'm scared it won't turn out perfect.**

- Remember that the goal of most writing assignments is to have you explore a subject – not to write the definitive answer on the subject.
- Don't worry about grammar & mechanics until *after* you have your ideas down. Separate the artist (creator of ideas) from the craftsman (cleaner-upper of ideas). Spend equal time on both parts & leave a 24 hour space between.

**I'm OK once I get started but I can't seem to begin. I can't see what it will look like in the end.**

- When we don't see exactly what details & what conclusion our papers will use, we may be afraid to begin. But it is not necessary to see the end at the start.
- Select a small part that you do know how to do. Do it. Then select another small part. Do it. Soon you will create a momentum that will carry you through the rest of the paper. This strategy, called "Swiss Cheese," pokes holes in the assignment.

**I really don't want to do the assignment.**

- You may choose not to do any assignment. However, you have to take the consequence that goes with it. If you procrastinate until the last minute & then throw something together, you will simply contribute to more bad memories you already have to the writing experience.
- Think about how completing this assignment well will help you achieve your goals. Then start early. Break the assignment up into manageable pieces. Get help from your instructor, a friend, or a writing tutor.
- Remember, even 50%, averaged into your other grades, will not damage your average too much, but a zero creates a massive dent in any grade average.

*For more information on any of the suggestions given here, please visit the Learning Café, located in the library (CE1340) / 403-382-6952 / [learningcafe@lethbridgecollege.ca](mailto:learningcafe@lethbridgecollege.ca)  
Or sign up for a Student Success Workshop!*