

BANISHING WRITER'S BLOCK

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If you're a writer, and everyone is in some form or another, you might need some prompts to develop a letter, a complaint, a record of events, a job application, a blog, book or other writing project.

Whether you write digitally or on paper, you might hit a snag and can't get started or keep going.

As a former writing coach, I've developed some strategies and approaches to clearing writer's block and getting you "unstuck." Once you get unstuck, you can usually keep going.

Here's how to set yourself up for banishing your writing block:

- If you can wait a day, as you get ready for sleep, think about what you want to write. Remind yourself of the writing's purpose. Then, enjoy your sleep. I often wake up with ideas that are helpful or inspiring for my writing. Write the ideas on a page or in "Notes" on your computer or smart phone.
- Prepare your writing space with no distractions. If you need quiet to write, alert anyone who shares your space that a closed door is notice to leave you alone – unless the building's on fire and you need to evacuate!

Start writing by:

- Putting whatever words come to you on the page. It's a start. Sometimes the words are brilliant, or can be used elsewhere, or saved until they inspire you for a new character, plot point, or new story entirely.
- If you have previous writing on this project complete, read a few pages of what is already there which –
- Usually allows you to "**Take a flying leap**" into the next section of your writing. Just keep going!
- Keep going until you get to what seems like the end of that new section. Then, go back to the end of the previous section and see if you can continue that thread. If your new writing works, keep it!
- Once you complete that day's writing, take the section that is out of sequence, extract the passages or paragraphs by swiping over the section (Control + X), then move the section to the end of your file (Control + V), where you can save it in a special file, to be found easily when you have the perfect place to use it.
- NOTE: When I was a journalist, I had the pleasure of interviewing Diana Gabaldon, bestselling author of the *Outlander* series. She uses the above approach to saving writing that is out of sequence for another use elsewhere. PS Thank you, Diana!

Special writing block-busting ideas for fiction writers:

If you're writing fiction, I've found the following helpful to augment my writing and knock out writer's block:

- Start with the **character** you plan to write about. If you've developed a spreadsheet with each character's details, review that.
- Create a **scene** (One you could, potentially, use in the story) for that character now that you have a fresher idea of who they are, what they care about, their characteristics (Impulsive, studied, polite, talkative, etc) and what their favorites are.(people, desserts, color, etc.)
- If you don't have a character's details in a **spreadsheet**, make that NOW! By the time you're done with this effort, you'll have a much better idea of who your character is and how they'd respond in any given situation.
- Create a **dialogue** between your main character and who they'd be speaking, arguing, or disagreeing with. Let yourself be each of the characters so you can be authentic in how you'd speak. Really step into their minds – walk a mile in their shoes – figuratively!
- **Meditate!** Close your eyes and inhale deeply, then exhale slowly to the count of ten. This will put you in a frame of mind to develop characters and scenes.

I hope you find these strategies useful! I especially use my "flying leap" approach to get started with a new setting, new scene, or dialogue.