

Published based on [How to Get Rid of Writer's Block](#)

# How to Get Rid of Writer's Block

by Dark Sith

The Great American novel is, right at this minute, right there on the tip of your toes. (People still wonder why you learned to type with your feet; and you would write a funny story based on that, if you could only decide how to get it started.) If you could just come up with a title, you might be able to get on to the first paragraph. Sound familiar?

What is Writer's Block?

There could be many reasons you're not writing:

\* Is there something troubling your mind, distracting you? Like that sink full of dirty dishes? Or the bills you haven't paid because you haven't sold an article in weeks, let alone got started on that book? Are you worried and under pressure? That's not writer's block. That's anxiety. Do something about it. Wash the dishes and go out and get a temporary day job to pay the bills. Write at night, unfettered by worries, and maybe you'll get back in the swing of it.

\* But if your schedule is the problem, adding an outside job to it is not going to remove the time pressures that are keeping you from writing.

\* Maybe you're trying too hard, everyone works at their own speed. You may just need some time away from the word processor. During relaxation periods your mind relaxes and your brain is free to come up with new ideas and get you fired up to get back in action.

\* Maybe it's just not meant to be. Ever consider the possibility that writing is really not for you? Maybe you're just not the whiz your 10th grade English teacher led you to believe. Maybe you never knew that, when you got into this business, it's so much work for (typically) very little money. Or maybe, given a choice between writing and watching another rerun of Gilligan's Island, you would rather be in front of the TV. It's time to become a plumber.

Writing - a Job Not for the Faint of Heart

Let's say you're good at writing fiction and that you enjoy it, can put up with the occasional long hours, and the rewards suit you fine. Why has your productivity suddenly stopped dead?

Maybe your current project isn't the piece of cake you expected. If it's going nowhere, you need to put it aside for a little while. Come back to it with a fresh mind. If it still looks like it's going nowhere, abandon it. This was not the story for you to tell. Learn the lesson and move on.

Do you find yourself going back over what you've written again and again, editing it, rather than moving forward with the story? Do you know you're good, but you're convinced you could be better? You're being a perfectionist. All of this is keeping you from moving forward, and it's also creating self-doubts about your talent. Force yourself to stop tweaking and get the job done.

Anyone for Mental Calisthenics?

For whatever reasons you're blocked, here are some exercises that can bring you out of it:

\* Write out a decision tree. This is simply two columns, with the first column listing reasons to proceed with your blocked project; the other column shows reasons why you shouldn't. Write whatever comes to mind. Then go back to critique and revise your answers. This can help you re-conceptualize the project and pinpoint where the blockage is originating.

\* Start writing the first chapter. Put down whatever you're thinking. It doesn't have to make sense, it doesn't have to be good, but it should, at some point, lead you into whatever you're going to write about. It should eventually begin to flow. You can toss the crap out once the project is done. Many writers find that their work improves if they

throw out the first chapter anyway, good or not.

\* Do research. You will probably want some background color or detail somewhere in your work. Take a character, a key concept, a setting, an idea, whatever may or may not appear in your work, and research it to death. Take notes. While you're doing this, you may come up with mental pictures relating to something in your story. Write those down. By the time you're done, you will have something to get you started on the story.

\* Jump ahead. If your narrative or characters are going nowhere, start a new chapter that's not in sequential order. Imagine what's going to happen to your characters long into the future. Jump backward, if you'd like, presenting some back story you had not yet included or elaborated upon. Skip anywhere you want. You can link all of these times and locations later.

### Feeding Your Obsession or Compulsion

Some people force themselves past a block. They set a time each day they will start writing and a time at which they will stop. Should they blank out one day, they will sit there staring at the computer screen. They are disciplined. They're working on the clock. For some, this works. For others, the artificial regimentation only adds to the frustration. You might want to try these ideas instead:

\* Visualize - not just your story but your finished project. See, in your mind's eye, your editor looking it over and enthusing. What is his favorite part? See your book prominently displayed at Border's and Barnes & Noble. Give yourself some positive encouragement. Let's face it, writing is not easy, and you don't always hit the jackpot. Allowing yourself to dream keeps the enthusiasm alive.

\* Network. You should belong to a writer's club or salon. Talk with other members about your block. They have all had it, too, and can give you some help. They might give you some ideas about your story points that are giving you trouble, too. A word of advice, though: never hand a finished manuscript to anyone but your editor. If they read it at all, their usual comment will be "I loved it! It's great, but" It's that "but" that will kill you. People with no experience as writers or editors always feel obliged, with a non-published manuscript, to tell you, in essence, how they would have written it. You wrote it, you don't care how they would have written it, but that "but" still hurts.

\* Jog your mind with some physical exercise.

\* Change how you work. Take your laptop from your home office down to the local coffeehouse to work. Work for a while using a pencil and legal pad. Sit out on the lawn with a recorder and hold a dialogue with yourself about the project.

About the Author:

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