8 Ways to Cure Writer's Block[1]

1. Make an idea web, brainstorm, free-write. If you are stuck, don't try to write a paper, just jot down ideas. Start with the idea you want to work with and write down anything and everything that comes to mind. You can always trash useless material later, but something worthwhile may appear in your ramblings.

2. Talk to someone about your ideas. The worst thing to do when you can't write is to sit in front of a blank screen or piece of paper. Go talk to a friend, a Writing Lab tutor, or a professor about an idea you have. You may be surprised at the amount of new ideas that come up during your discussion.

3. Dictate your ideas. If no one is around to talk to, dictate your ideas using a tape recorder. Try to talk for five minutes straight about the ideas you have concerning your topic. Often it is easier to verbalize your ideas before trying to write them down.

4. Change your scenery. If you are having problems writing in one location, move to another. If you sit long enough in one place and don't accomplish anything, it will be difficult to feel motivated in that space. Move to a new place and try again.

5. Read. Read from a work that inspires you to write. Or if you can't think of any particular work, read anything available. Notice the flow of ideas, the structure of sentences, and the words that the author uses.

6. Write a letter. If you can't write a paper at this time, write a letter to a friend. The act of actually writing *something* may set you in the right mode.

7. Put someone else's name on your paper. If you don't have to take credit for what you are writing, you may feel less critical of it. Besides, it's only a first draft anyway, so make lots of mistakes!

8. Quit and do something else. If you absolutely cannot write a paper at this time, quit. Go running, do your laundry, get active. Give yourself the time to get up, move around and clear your head. When you are feeling refreshed and re-energized, try again.

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[1] adapted from Donald M. Murray's <u>Write to Learn</u>