Help! I Need More Words for My Writing!

Monday, March 21, 2016 @ 7 pm ET
Presenter – Kyle Harley
Kaplan University Writing Center

Access the workshop recording here: http://khe2.adobeconnect.com/p8yn78el947/
1. Identify and define Writer’s Block

2. Explore common reasons for “Idea Fatigue”

3. Provide strategies to overcome idea/content burnout
Have you ever struggled with your writing? So much so that you seem to have run out of options? How about when you begin writing: do you tend to start out well and begin losing track of your own thoughts as you progress? Has this ever been such a problem that you actually stopped with your writing? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may have struggled or still be in the process of struggling with Writer’s Block.

There is good news; however, because each and every single writer, at one point or another, experiences the proverbial “wall” that Writer’s Block builds in our minds.

As a definition, Writer’s Block is exactly as it sounds: a blocking of one’s ability to write. Often observed during the first draft of the paper, Writer’s Block disables a writer from completing their writing task for a variety of reasons. Instead of highlighting what triggers Writer’s Block, the focus of this presentation will revolve around methods to overcome Writer’s Block and how these practices will help prevent additional scenarios in the future. By the end of this workshop, participants should walk away with tips and tricks to keep them on track to write quality papers without the fear of Writer’s Block.
Writer’s block and/or idea fatigue plagues everyone at some point in time: simply put—how can I write any more? Usually idea fatigue manifests itself when we run out of ideas or simply can’t think of anything new or useful to say. This leads to an increased level of frustration, and, in the worst of cases, a lack of motivation to complete the given assignment. Yes, writing is a difficult concept and practice, but there is nothing holding you back but yourself.
So we’ve identified the problem, but what are some solutions? Let me know in the chat area what you’ve learned in relation to getting help with your writing. What do you do? Where do you go? What are some unique experiences you employ to “get the creative juices flowing?” Let me know in the chat below, and let’s discuss some of these options.
First, and this may read a bit silly to some: Did you read the instructions? More often than not, and usually quite specifically, the professor will list a series of instructions that must be accomplished. As a skimmer, I was caught victim of not fully reading the instructions in the past, as well. Be sure that you are reading the instructions diligently; each and every step is required, whether you agree with it or not. Next, with that in mind, did you accomplish said tasks? If you did your work and made sure that all elements of the draft are complete, you should be well on your way, but double checking allows you to accomplish the most. Also, remember that assignments are more than just page/word requirements. Sure, you met the goal, but did you meet the assignment? Six pages of fluff is worse than two pages of sound prose, so be sure that you, again, fully completed the assignment requirements.

How to avoid this? Check the instructions!

1. Fully read the assignment instructions
2. Did you accomplish all of the listed tasks?
3. Assignments are MORE than just page/word requirements
Working in reverse order has to be one of the best tools to make sure you are accomplishing what you need to. More often than not, professors are very specific about their assignments, detailing everything they expect in the draft. Why not go through and analyze every paragraph? Are you answering all the questions? Does the assignment flow well based on your construction? More often than not, students tend to run out of ideas because they focus on only one aspect of the draft and expect the rest to write itself. If your professor is asking for A, B, and C, you must then answer accordingly. By looking at each paragraph, even at the base idea level, students can understand what they have and what needs accomplished. We’ve all been there: midnight, the night before, well, morning before, and we have an assignment due and, yes, we are, in fact, stressing about it. How does one overcome the odds? Looking at what you already have! The last point here is the most important, and one folks often overlook: Did you meet all of the requirements? If you can’t answer the question, you’ve yet to answer the assignment.

Deconstruct what you already have

1. Work in reverse order—start at the end!

2. Pair this outline/list with your assignment

3. Did you meet all of the requirements?
You’re sitting there on your laptop, typing away, and your wife or husband is sitting, relaxing, probably giggling, and he or she is watching *South Park* on Hulu, right? Who wouldn’t be distracted? For that reason, it’s all the more important to make sure that you never drift off when writing. Separate yourself from the binge TV. Find a place that’s very quiet, or even conducive to your style. I used to read books while listening to techno and rave music, so I can’t judge. Just make sure that you find a place that is….yours. Avoid the temptation, avoid the senseless noise, and, most importantly, be sure that, while in this place, that you full explore YOUR idea. Make this like your safe space, if you will. These are your ideas and certainly your thoughts, so mute the nonsense on cable for a minute, put on some good tunes if that’s your thing, and really vibe with your writing. Make it your own. Explore your thoughts. Why else are you writing in the first place, right?

**Did you finish your own thought?**

1. Sometimes we drift off
2. Find areas in need of additional focus
3. Be sure you fully explain/explore your idea; we want to know what you think!
Now this one isn’t a very popular method with students, and that’s fine. But every now and again, far more than most would like, professors suggest that...your sources are up to snuff. Why is that? Well, to be blunt, many folks don’t really do enough research. Just typing in a search query and finding the first match does not mean that you did your research. Sure, you typed something into a search bar, and that’s a start, but where do we go from there? First, ask yourself if this is the best source for your paper. If you did enough research, this step can be skipped, but options 2 and 3 speak volumes. If you found a good resource, try and find a better one! Just because you found the Holy Grail does not mean the search is over. Challenge yourself! Look for opposing viewpoints, or even better examples of the fantastic work you’ve recently uncovered! The more research you conduct, the better your paper/idea will be, and I defy anyone to suggest anything differently when utilizing outside research.
What Else You Can Do:
Come to the Writing Center! We offer two amazing services that will give you an extra set of eyes on your paper.
1. Paper Review.
2. Live Tutoring.
Peer Review works great, too!

We also have an abundant amount of resources at your disposal. Use them! They work wonders and really are helpful when in a tight spot!
Connect with the KUWC’s public webpage. You can actually Google and find this page. This is also a great way for you to stay connected to the KUWC through Facebook and Twitter. Many of our resources are here as well.
Come visit us. We can be found under the My Studies tab, then under Academic Support Center.
On the main Academic Support Center page, you will see the Writing Center links. These include Live Tutoring, Paper Review Service, the Writing Reference Library, Citation Guidelines, Workshops, English Language Learner, and Fundamental writing help. Notice, you can access the Kaplan Guide to Successful Writing on the right hand side in both print and audio form.
Click on any of the links on the slide to learn more.

Writing Center
Writing Tutor
Paper Review and Q&A Services
Writing Reference Library
Citation Guidelines (APA & more)
Writing Workshops
Graduate Student Resources
English Language Learners
Writing Fundamentals Program
Effective Writing Podcasts Series
First-Term Student Resources

The best time to do a paper review in the Kaplan University Writing Center is after you have written your first draft. When you come to us early, we can help you the most by helping you with the structure of your paper. Many students send papers at the last minute because they want us to simply proofread their paper. However, KUWC writing tutors do not simply proofread
the paper for you; we want to help you learn to write and proofread your own papers. You can submit a first draft, and then submit a later draft if you need further help on an assignment.

If you need help before you write the first draft, you can use live tutoring. During live tutoring, you can ask questions and brainstorm with a tutor. Live tutors can help you with other stages in the paper writing process as well.
Contact Information

Help! I Need More Words for My Writing!
Kyle Harley, Amy Sexton, Tutor, Workshops
Write us at kuwc@kaplan.edu!

Workshops are recorded and recording links, with an accompanying PowerPoint, are posted on the Writing Center Workshops page after the workshop.

Additional Kaplan University Writing Center Resources

Introductory Video
Survey Link
Writing Center

Connect with the Academic Support Centers.