

Writer's Block has long been the nemesis of authors both starting out and well advanced in their careers. It stems from a single source: lack of adequate preparation before you sit down to write. Do your research. Think your subject through carefully, and you will never face a blank screen again.

Writer's Block – Real or Imagined?

Writer's block has become so popular an excuse for not writing that it has moved into everyday parlance. An idea flashes through your mind. A great article. You sit down at the computer, and that blank white screen leers back at you, challenging you to fill it with your brilliance. You can't. You are blocked.

Is this a disease/? Or some other malady that particularly affects writers?

Absolutely not!

Writer's Block happens because you are not prepared. You have the inspiration...the idea. But you haven't thought it through carefully to determine exactly what it is you want to tell your reader.

With any task, the toughest part is getting started. But if you begin by organizing your thoughts before transposing them to the computer screen, you will find the words flow easily and smoothly.

Selecting Your Niche

Many beginners struggle to find a fresh, new subject to write about. But you must understand there are no new untouched subjects. However, there are many unexplored approaches to a subject, and it up to you to find one that corresponds to your thoughts.

I am sure you have heard people recommend, "Write what you know." This generally is sound advice, but it comes with a caveat. Beware of the temptation to believe

that you already know all that is necessary about the subject. That's seldom true. So don't shortcut your research.

I often point out that an experienced trout fisherman undoubtedly knows lots more about how to tie a *Greased Lightning* than I do. But there are always new flies and new lures coming on the market, and even the most experienced fisherman must be aware of new developments.

Search Yourself

When a student of mine complains he/she can't find anything to write about, my response is very simple. Search your mind and list the subjects that interest you the most, regardless of what they are. Match those to ones about which you feel you already know the most. Don't limit your choices. There are magazines and book publishers ready to publish material on any subject if it is presented well.

Think of your personal or your professional life. What is unique about your family? Perhaps one of your siblings is dysfunctional. He/she acted out at school, embarrassing you. How did you cope? Your Dad, heaven forbid, had Cancer, forcing Mom to go to work. These are just very simplistic examples of choosing personal matters to write about. You can do the same with your experiences in the workplace.

Offline Sources

Remarkable sources for ideas abound both on and offline. *Writer's Market*, the directory of book and periodical publishers that is updated annually is a treasure trove of ideas. You'll find more than 100 periodicals listed on its 1000-plus pages, all sorted by subject. Thumb through the index first and then through the specific magazines that cover the area in which you are interested.

Go a bit further and actually dig into the content of each listing that is appropriate to your interests. Since different magazines dealing with the same subject often have different biases and approaches, you are bound to discover an idea that lights a fire in your mind.

You should have similar success with directories like *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*. Others like *BurrellesLuce* and *Bacons* can be helpful, but do not give the same degree of detail offered by the first two I listed.

Of course, the daily and weekly newspapers you read can provide endless possibilities of topics to write about. Review them carefully, and clip any article that you think might generate an idea for the future.

Online Sources

Anyone who has searched the Internet can assure you that few resources can match the diversity you'll find when you enter a search online. Hundreds, thousands, even at times more than a million diverse listings will pop up. Among them you are sure to find the idea that fits your needs perfectly.

Often you can uncover the specific approach the site offers by reading the abbreviated first line of text. Open up the site and you may well find the material you need to begin your article or book.

As you can see, there is no dearth of sources ready and available to make it easy to choose a subject and the unique approach that appeals to you. Follow this pattern and you will never again be stymied as you sit at your computer. Indeed, you will never again have to face Writer's Block.

