



FOUR STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU WRITE A DRAFT

Most of us think that to write means to sit down at the computer or before a blank page and spill words out. Because of time, because of conditioning, because of laziness, because we aren't aware, we skip all the stages of writing that precede this stage. That might work for some, but for us (and most of the writers we know), when we started paying attention to all that came before, our thinking became clearer, and drafting became easier. So that's the first thing to know about drafting: don't start drafting until you've collected information, selected and organized the best, identified what you want to say, and made a plan. But once you've done all that and are ready to write a draft, here are a few tools that might help.

- ◆ Allow yourself to make mistakes. To write well, you have to be willing to write badly. Try to turn off your inner editor for a while and just write. Lowering your standards now is fine, as long as you raise them again later.
- ◆ If you are having trouble turning off that inner editor, try turning off the computer screen. If that editor can't see the typos, he can't get upset about them.
- ◆ Break large projects (or even little ones) into small assignments. Tell yourself: "Today I need to write the scene where Truman hears about the bombing of Hiroshima. Tomorrow I need to summarize what Professor Dallek thinks of that moment." There is nothing wrong with writing one sentence, even one word, at a time. The old saying is true: take enough small steps and you will complete even the longest journey. Besides, you'll be pleasantly surprised at how good making one small step forward can feel.



- ◆ If you are having trouble writing the beginning, write the middle or the end. You can always tie things together later. And the act of writing one part might help you see how to write the others.

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