

PREWRITING AND BATTLING WRITER'S BLOCK

All writers, even professionals, feel stuck in the mud with their writing at times. This is normal and should not lead you to the conclusion, "I'm just not a very good writer." The following tips will help get you unstuck.

ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

First and foremost, get rid of distractions and clear your mental and physical space. Put your phone in a different room. Close Facebook. Turn off (or at least down) the music. Shut the door, and let others know you need some time without interruptions. Clean up your work area; a cluttered desk can result in a cluttered mind. Also, avoid writing when you are too tired or hungry.

FREE-WRITE

When you free-write, let your thoughts flow, putting pen to paper and writing down whatever comes into your mind—no internal judgments, no editing. Just let it all out.

- Use a timer, and keep putting words down until it stops.
- Ask yourself prompting questions: *Why did I choose this topic? What does it mean to me? Why does it matter? How have I come to believe the way I do?*
- Just keep writing. Don't stop.

MAKE LISTS

Another tactic is using lists that help you gather more perspective on the topic. Try making lists on any of these:

- possible topics
- the general topic
- sequence of events or argument

GET CREATIVE

- Carry a notebook everywhere and write down your observations.
- Put your ideas on notecards.
- Use graphs or charts to organize your ideas.
- Discuss your ideas with a friend or a tutor.

WRITE A "MINI" VERSION OF YOUR PAPER

After you have your rough outline, brainstorming, and thesis done, try writing a mini version of your paper. Imagine that your assignment is actually a fraction of its actual size and write a short draft.

WALK AWAY

Give it a rest. If you feel yourself getting angry or frustrated with your writing, just walk away and take a break. Do or think about something else for a while—something enjoyable—and then come back to your project with fresh eyes and a relaxed mind.

PRAY FOR CLARITY

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). Finally, ask in prayer for help and enlightenment on your topic, and then listen for those subtle ideas and promptings from the Spirit. Often, using

some of these brainstorming techniques and taking a break from the project gives the Spirit the vehicle and time to inspire you.