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# Unblocking the Creative Flow of the Busy Scholarly Writer

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## Unblocking the Creative Flow of the Busy Scholarly Writer

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### **Unblocking the Creative Flow of the Busy Scholarly Writer**

Writers' block can affect any scholarly author, whether he or she is new to the writing game or has a great deal of experience in composition and publication. As a destructive force, it feels a little like lightning, striking without warning and causing both immediate damage and unsettling rumbles that can linger for far too long.

Writers' block is especially problematic when you are working to a tight deadline or simply have very little time in which to write the text you must and submit it for publication. Experiencing writers' block during the summer vacation, when many scientists and academics are trying to complete all the research and writing they have planned and postponed through the instructional year, can therefore be extremely detrimental, hindering the progress of your work and, potentially, the advancement of your career. It goes without saying, then, that it is essential to put a stop to writers' block immediately or to prevent it from starting altogether.

Unfortunately, the search for perfection – the perfect words in the perfect order

to achieve the perfect form of expression – is often to blame for writers' block, and the more formal, polished and important the writing you must do is, the more difficult it is to let ideas flow in written text. Certainly the writing you do to report and publish your research is important and, as serious scholarship, it should obviously be formal and polished, yet there is no need to freight yourself with the burdens of importance, formality and perfection as you tackle each and every word, sentence and paragraph, and this is especially the case as you begin. Writing spontaneously and rather informally as you first draft a paper or chapter can be incredibly liberating and constructive.

Remember that an outline will help keep you on track as you work, and thoughtfully designed tables and figures will give you something concrete to discuss. Grammatical errors and awkward passages can be ignored as you draft your document, and references and other complications can be set aside for later with simple tags such as 'add data from trial 3' or 'add reference to Smith, 2012.' Your focus should be getting information and ideas down on the page and thereby tracing with words the basic path of your argument. Such an approach should not encourage you to ignore essential aspects of your writing, but it can prevent you from worrying about every little detail at too early a stage and therefore allow you to move ahead with your work. You will need to proofread and edit your text more than once, in any case, so it is wise, especially if you are experiencing writers' block, to concentrate on writing something that you can then improve, refine, enhance, complicate, complete and polish before submitting it for publication.

To keep your writing flowing from day to day while working on a long text, start each day by looking over the last couple of paragraphs you drafted the day before. You will probably find yourself adding, deleting and changing bits, and before you know it you will be moving on to the next paragraphs simply because your own thoughts and words will take you there in order to continue your discussion and advance your argument. Some parts of your document will prove easier to write than other parts will, and some days your writing will be better than it is on other days, but keep in mind that perfection is rarely attainable in a first draft and the only true cure for writers' block is writing. Worrying is counterproductive and will never solve the problem, but channelling that anxious energy into actively producing text will.

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