

BEATING WRITER'S BLOCK

A Few of My Favorite Warm-Up Exercises

1. Pretend you are an inanimate object that comes to life. Write a short story or scene from its perspective, using the first person.

Example

I love the sound that my teeth make when I bite down on fresh, strong, clean paper as it comes out of the printer. My teeth marks are always straight and I almost never fail to produce a perfect metal curl on the other side. My home is right near the office window, so I get a great view of the office park and my polished chrome accents have a special way of gleaming in the sunshine. My caretaker always seems to know exactly when I'm hungry, and she always fills me up. I am, of course, an everyday stapler—but I feel like so much more!

2. Find a magazine or newspaper article with a great headline, first line, or last line. Then take that snippet and write a short article around it—even if you have to make up some facts.
3. Pretend you have just landed in the future or the past. Write a letter to an older or younger version of yourself to explain your organization as it exists today. (What would you choose to talk about?)
4. Turn off your computer monitor and start typing. You will not be able to see what you write, which prevents your internal editor from sabotaging you. When you are satisfied, turn your monitor back on and behold the unfettered creativity right before your eyes.

Recommended Resources

Buzan, Tony, and Barry Buzan. *The Mind Map Book: How to Use Radiant Thinking to Maximize Your Brain's Untapped Potential*. Plume, 1996. The popularizer of the mind mapping concept explores many ways for writers and others to benefit from this non-linear thinking and planning technique.

Houston, Velina Hasu. *Writer's Block Busters: 101 Exercises to Clear the Deadwood and Make Room for Flights of Fancy*. Smith & Kraus, 2008. This little book, written by a playwright, is great for getting your creative juices flowing by focusing on characters and scenes.

Krause, Jim. *Creative Sparks: An Index of 150+ Concepts, Images and Exercises to Ignite Your Design Ingenuity*. David & Charles Ltd, 2003. A collection of thought-provoking concepts, suggestions, anecdotes and exercises to stimulate the creative, innovative thinking that designers need. Also great for writers!

Rico, Gabriele. *Writing the Natural Way: Using Right-Brain Techniques to Release Your Expressive Power*. Tarcher, 2000. Offers creative ways to let your inner writer out.

Rountree, Cathleen. *Writer's Mentor: A Guide to Putting Passion on Paper*. Conari Press, 2002. Advice for those choosing a writer's life, including topics on how to get started and keep going.

Staw, Jane Anne. *Unstuck: A Supportive and Practical Guide to Working Through Writer's Block*. St. Martin's Press, 2003. Each chapter ends with exercises you can do to help you get unstuck.

FreeMind. http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page . This free mindmapping software can enhance your productivity.

Myers-Briggs Personality Indicators: <http://facstaff.buffalostate.edu/smithrd/PRWrite/mbti.htm>

Visual Thesaurus: <http://www.visualthesaurus.com/> Another mindmapping tool (free trial version, with some public libraries owning a full subscription).