

Writing Past Fear: 10 Ways to Stop Worrying and Start Writing

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Many people claim that they want to write. Most won't because of a giant monster called FEAR. It looms over individuals and paralyzes them. "What if I'm no good?" "What if I'm wasting my time?" "What if..." "What if..." "What if..." Fear creates these never-ending questions, but fortunately the beast can be conquered. It's conquered every day. Here are ten ways to get over fear and start writing:

- 1) **Handwrite.** There's something informal about writing longhand. Just grab a piece of paper and jot notes down. They do not have to be anything brilliant. What you write could be something as simple as "I wish I had an idea about..." Don't worry what your handwriting looks like, just fill the page with free thought.
- 2) **Send yourself an email.** An email isn't "real writing" so use this format to jot a story down. You can write about an imaginary day or a neighborhood event. This is a great exercise to get in the storytelling mode and you don't have to worry about the recipient – it's you!
- 3) **Commit before you're ready.** Tell someone you're a writer and let them give you an assignment. Anything from writing a menu to a libretto. There's no grading involved and to encourage yourself to accept the challenge promise yourself that you get a prize *when* you start.
- 4) **Write out the fears.** I know it can be scary to face them, but you can't defeat what you don't acknowledge. List all your fears. After you've finished writing them down, come up with ways to get rid of them. For example if you wrote, "I'm afraid I'm no good." You could counter this statement with "I don't have to be. It's only a rough draft." Counter "My ideas are stupid." with "No, I'm trying to be perfect and I don't have to be."
- 5) **Pretend to be someone else.** Write in a different style, say an eighteenth century writer or one of your favorite bestselling authors. Mimic their rhythms and patterns. It's not for you to compare, just to experiment. Write your article as Mark Twain would. Or start a short story about a kitten, first in the style of a horror writer then as a literary one. As children most of us didn't have a problem with make-believe, it works for us adults too!
- 6) **Find a postcard.** Look at the image on the front and jot down ideas about it on the back. You don't have to fill up the entire space, this exercise is about getting ideas flowing.
- 7) **Come up with a mantra that allows bad writing.** "I will succeed as long as I write." "Bad stories can be rewritten. A blank page can't." Keep these mantras (you can have as many as you want) close by and say it/them out loud when fear raises its ugly head.

8) Remember you're reading the finished product. When you're reading a published book or article you're rarely (if ever) reading someone's first draft. The book or article has gone through who knows how many revisions, editorial review, copyedits, etc... Once your work is finished, it will go through the same process before it's shared with the public. So relax, you don't have to be perfect.

9) Fear means you care. Far too often a writer may become too egotistical and ignore the benefit of being fearful. Not to the extent of being paralyzed, but using fear as a guide. By caring about your work and being concerned that your readers like or accept it will help you make sure your work is the best that it can be.

10) Procrastinate. You can always worry later. Write now.

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