



The Betty East Tutoring Center at Victoria College

Johnson Hall, Room 106
2200 E. Red River St.
Victoria, TX 77901
361-571-6473

www.victoriacollege.edu/tutoringcenter

Writing Anxiety

Many students are uncomfortable writing something for class, especially to write during class under the added pressure of a time limit. You may be anxious just thinking of a good topic, much less developing it and having your writing evaluated by your instructor. You may find yourself sitting and staring at a blank page, waiting for words to come to you. This frustrating feeling is writer's block, and every writer has experienced it. However, when you experience writer's block every time you write, you have writing anxiety. The following techniques may help you overcome your writing anxiety. Try all of them in your assignments to help create habits that will serve you well in school and in your future career.

Write Often

One way to control writing anxiety is to write often. Like any skill, writing improves with practice. Try keeping a journal to record a paragraph about your thoughts or activities; or, you may like to try some "freewriting" with fictional stories and poems. You could sit in a public place and make up characters about people that you see. Be sure to read your work out loud each day to help you note mistakes you make. No matter what you choose to write about, setting aside just a small amount of time each day to write will make you more confident about your ability to write.

Start with a Plan

Another way of coping with writing anxiety is to have a plan of what you will write before you begin your paper. It is helpful to construct a list of the points you want to make and then use your list to guide you as you write. If you are having trouble organizing the points you want to make, talk to a classmate or a tutor about your ideas. Hearing your own ideas out loud and discussed with you may spark an idea. The Tutoring Center can help you with any stage of your paper from brainstorming, outlining, and working through drafts.

Predict Essay Questions

If you are preparing for an essay exam, especially if there will be a time limit, try to predict the questions you will be asked. Use your class notes and the topics emphasized in your textbook to predict the kinds of questions that might appear. You might want to look at some of the professors' old exams to help you predict good essay questions. Anticipating what information may be wanted is valuable in school and in the workplace.

Start Early

Because students who experience writing anxiety try to avoid writing, they often procrastinate until the last minute. This only adds to your stress and robs you of valuable time you could use to improve your essay until you are comfortable with the results. You may believe that you can write under pressure, but you are incorrect—if you do not make a good grade on a writing project, it is because you churned it out too quickly, not because you have trouble writing. If this sounds like you, start earlier the next time you write. Begin your work as soon as possible after the paper is assigned. Narrow down your topic and work on a strong thesis statement. Give thought to how you want to organize the paper and the points you want to stress. Then, work on the paper a little bit each day. If you have trouble in the beginning, you'll still have plenty of time to get some help and finish your paper on time—without stressing out.