



Coping with Writing Anxiety

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For more advice on getting started writing, see the Purdue OWL handout, Overcoming Writer's Block at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_block.html.

Many situations or activities, such as writing, taking tests, competing in sports, or speaking before a large audience, may make us anxious or apprehensive. It's important to remember that a moderate level of anxiety is helpful and productive. That flow of adrenaline is a natural response that helps get us ready for action. Without it, we might not perform as well.

If we let our anxiety overwhelm us, it can cause problems. If we control that anxiety, however, we can make it work for us. One way to do that is to use some of the coping strategies listed below.

Coping Strategies:

- Focus your energy by rehearsing the task in your head.
- Consciously stop the non-productive comments running through your head by replacing them with productive ones.
- If you have some "rituals" for writing success, use them.

Examples:

- Follow a protocol you may have for organizing your time. Use a favorite pen if you have one.
- Spend a few minutes doing some relaxation exercises.
- Take a break: physically walk away from the situation for a few minutes if you can.

Relaxation Strategies

- Stretch! If you can't stand up, stretch as many muscle groups as possible while staying seated.
 - Try tensing and releasing various muscle groups. Starting from your toes, tense up for perhaps five to ten seconds and then let go. Relax and then go on to another muscle group.
 - Breathe deeply. Close your eyes; then, fill your chest cavity slowly by taking four or five short deep breaths. Hold each breath until it hurts, and then let it out slowly.
 - Use a calming word or mental image to focus on while relaxing. If you choose a word, be careful not to use an imperative. Don't command yourself to "Calm down!" or "Relax!"
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This page is located at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/general/gl_anxiety.html

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