

In part one I went over strategies for stopping the writer's block when it was linked to you being over tired. This issue we're going to deal with an equally common problem, and one that's got a few easy fixes.

The Problem: "There ain't nothing in here..."

While a lot of people experiencing writer's block can attribute a specific cause to the blocked flow of words, the vast majority look deep inside for a reason and come up with...

Nothing.

There doesn't seem to be rhyme or reason, you feel fine, you've slept enough, no one's punching you in face (this was a problem for me at one time) but the words just aren't flowing. It can be a feeling of frustration, or fear or just a general apathy towards your writing that leaves you surfing the internet for hours promising yourself: "I'll get to it, just fifteen more minutes of lolcats".

And looking back several months later wondering why you haven't written a word.

Fortunately the fix for this side of writers block is easy, so easy that you'll be kicking yourself that writer's block ever got you down in the first place.

The Fix!

There are two I use. The trigger technique, a method of inducing a productive mental state in yourself. The other technique is the random word technique. NLP master Alan Fayter* taught me the trigger technique from NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) and the random word technique is one I made up some time ago. Try them both.

The Trigger:

Pick a gesture. Any gesture, as long as it's an unusual one (and one you can make in public without getting lynched). I pinch the thumb and pinkie finger on my left hand together but you can pick anything you like.

Normally the technique says to wait until you are feeling excellent flow in your writing. The words are coming out like magic and you love being a writer more than anything else in the world. Then, while in that state you fire your trigger.

Then do it again.

And again. How many times to fire the trigger is under some debate, I usually go anywhere between three and five times to make sure that the state I'm in and the feeling of flowing words are tied together.

Understand all that? Good.

Now you need to know you probably won't use it, at least not if you're anything like I am. If you're anything like me you'll wait until you're already knee deep in a problem before you do anything about, including writer's block. So instead of waiting for the words to come to you, you're going to go to them. Remember what it was like the last time you wrote like your life depended on it. Focus on that feeling, in your head. See what it was like. Hear the keys clicking across the keyboard, feel the energy surging through you as the words jump from your fingers onto the screen.

And if you've never felt the writer's high before, imagine it. See, hear and feel what you think it feels like to be your favorite author working on a masterpiece.

Now that you're imagining that feeling, or remembering it, *now* fire your trigger. Feel those feelings again, then follow up with the trigger. And again.

This may seem a little bit strange, but what did you think your favorite sports stars were doing when they performed their pre match rituals? Even if it's unconscious, humans are programmed towards little rituals that help put them in a state that's favorable to them. Why not take advantage of it? It doesn't have to be hand gesture, any gesture or ritual you set up can be made into a trigger.

Writing pipes, old typewriters and favorite jerseys have been writing triggers for famous authors of the past. What you use is entirely over to your imagination.

Give this a try now.

The random word trick:

This isn't as involved as using NLP to bring about a favorable state; it's just a trick to fool your truculent brain into thinking you've already started writing, so it might as well participate. This is a good one for sudden onset writer's block, where you are halfway through a chapter and suddenly you run out of words.

Grab a book. It can be anything, a cook book, an accounting text book anything. Open it and stab your finger onto the page. Whatever word you hit, you're going to type that word into your manuscript.

The important part of this is that no matter which word you use, you type it out. It doesn't matter if it's wildly wrong for your paragraph, or even your book. The important thing is typing it and then looking at the word you typed in your manuscript. Just occasionally it's the right word. If so, great, you are going again, type the next logical word in that sentence. By the time you're three words along the path you'll know where it leads.

That's always great when it happens, but the real magic of the random word trick is when the word is wrong. Let's say you picked (as I once did) the word cumin. Unless you're

writing a cookbook, cumin is unlikely to feature heavily in your story. Look at it on your page.

You know it's wrong.

Your brain will tell you what you want to replace it with. Even if it's just one word, that's all you need to start again. Just one good word and you can do the trick again. Just as before, all you need is to get three words down the path and you'll never look back. If you get stuck again, just pick another random word.

I hope these two strategies help you as much as they've helped me. Next time I'll be looking at burnout, symptoms and cures.

*You can find Alan at www.optimum-mind.co.nz