

The WCTS Helps With:
Overcoming Writing Anxiety

What is Writing Anxiety?



“People aren’t born anxious writers; rather, they become anxious or blocked through negative or difficult experiences with writing.”¹ Writing anxiety is the sensation that students experience when they are beginning the writing process. It may encompass procrastination, writer’s block, nerves about failing, and panic attacks. It often comes in waves causing you to put off doing the work which leaves you struggling to write to your full potential in a limited time frame. Writing anxiety affects everyone, even the most experienced writers, especially when facing a new writing task. For example, if someone is prolific in creative writing, they might find themselves anxiety stricken over a biology paper.

Tips and Tricks

- **Start Early:**

- Starting early allows you to space your work out, take things slow, and not procrastinate. You don’t necessarily need to begin working on a paper the day that it is assigned, but leaving it until the day that it is due will cause anxiety to rise. As a result, you may lose sleep, feel extra pressure, and not provide your best work.

- **Take things slow:**

- It sounds cheesy, but taking things one step at a time can help eliminate writing anxiety. Start by creating an outline (we have sources on how to do so on our website), and if need be, come back a day or two later. This way, you are allowing yourself to manage the anxiety instead of letting it manage you.

- **Break up the work:**

- For students that struggle with writing anxiety, writing an entire paper in one day is not beneficial. Begin by writing an introduction or a body

¹ Quoted from “Writing Anxiety.” The Writing Center at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. For more support, access their resource here: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/writing-anxiety/>.

paragraph and play to your strengths. If you are great at analysis, then analyzing evidence would be a wise place to start.

- **When in doubt, come to the Writing Center!**
 - Tutors would be more than happy to help students with any writing need they might be searching for—outlines, brainstorming, organization, analysis—you name it; we can help you through it!

Resources for Writing Anxiety Support

- [The Counseling Center at Illinois Wesleyan](#): If your anxiety is affecting your school work, it is a good idea to meet with one of our counselors to talk through strategies to manage the new challenges college brings your way.
- [The Student Success Tutors at the WCTS](#): Our trained, peer student success tutors are great at offering strategies to avoid procrastination, to plan out an academic schedule, and to avoid test taking anxiety, too. They can help you online or in person in Ames Library 105b.
- [The Ames Library](#): Our library has many great resources on writing successfully including the following:
 - [Learning and Teaching Writing Online](#): Strategies for success—great if you’re taking remote classes with a writing component, even if they’re not writing-intensive.
 - [Writer’s Block](#): a quick article that encourages writers to start, even if it feels like they have nothing to write.
 - [Writing in College: from Competence to Excellence](#): a great book that addresses how to take your writing to the next level. Chapters address everything from transitioning from high school to college-level writing, constructing a thesis, and understanding professor expectations. It’s available online through Ames though the link requires you to enter the title in again when the CARLI database loads.