

Writer's block isn't the result of a blank mind — it's a blocked one. You know more than you think you do.

These prompts are designed to get it out of your head and onto the page. Find the section that describes where you are right now, pick one prompt, and write without stopping or editing. You're not trying to produce something good. You're trying to get your thinking down, because that's how to unblock your writing.

GETTING STARTED (3 MINUTE PROMPTS)

- Spend three minutes writing about how the section you are working on now relates to your larger text/project.
- Spend three minutes summing up something you haven't yet managed to address in your writing.
- Spend three minutes writing about something you feel is important but that you don't fully understand.
- Spend three minutes writing about a key concept that you are going to deal with in this section.
- Spend three minutes outlining a problem/issue that you are writing about.
- Spend three minutes writing down three key questions you would like the section you are working on now to answer.
- Spend three minutes writing down what you would like your reader to learn from reading this piece.
- Spend three minutes writing down what your reader needs to know already in order to understand the section you are writing/point you are making.
- Spend three minutes writing down everything you know about a particular point (it's often a good idea to make this a very small point).

KEEPING GOING (A PROMPT FOR A 25-MINUTE POMODORO)

Getting Unstuck

1. "What I really want to say about my research is..."

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2. "If I had to explain my thesis to a curious 12-year-old, I would say..."
3. "The most surprising thing I've discovered so far is..."
4. "I love my research because..."

Chapter Planning and Organization

5. "The purpose of this chapter/section is to..."
6. "The three most important points I need to make are..."
7. "What my reader needs to understand before reading this section is..."
8. "The story this chapter tells is..."
9. "If this chapter were a journey, it would start at... and end at..."

Argument Development

10. "My central argument is... and it matters because..."
11. "The evidence that most strongly supports my position is..."
12. "Someone might disagree with me by saying... but I would respond..."
13. "The gap in existing research that my work fills is..."
14. "The big question my thesis answers is..."

Literature Review

15. "The conversation my research joins is..."
16. "Scholar X says... but Scholar Y argues... and I think..."
17. "The theorist who most influences my thinking is... because..."
18. "Where the existing literature leaves off, my work begins by..."

Alternative Perspectives

19. "If I were writing this for a popular magazine, I would focus on..."
20. "The policy implications of my research are..."
21. "In 10 years, someone reading my thesis will..."
22. "If I had unlimited funding to extend this research, I would..."

When Feeling Lost

23. "What I know for certain about my topic is..."
24. "The questions I can definitely answer are..."
25. "Three things I've learned that I didn't know before are..."

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26. "If I had to write just one page that captures the essence of my work, it would say..."

Conclusions

27. "The contribution my thesis makes is..."

28. "What I want readers to remember from my work is..."

29. "The strongest part of my argument is..."

30. "Future researchers should know..."

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