

The 1-Hour Writing Challenge

In need of some writing motivation? Try our 1-Hour Writing Challenge!

Are you working on your dissertation, project or thesis? Are there times when you just don't know where to start, or when you can think of at least 900 things you'd rather do than write?! Never fear, our 1-Hour Writing Challenge is here to help you get focused, avoid overwhelm and make some progress with your writing.

Step One: Setting Writing Goals (5 minutes)

You're more likely to lose focus if you don't specify a clear writing goal. And you could end up putting yourself off if the goal you do identify is too ambitious. So let's spend the first 5 minutes of the session ensuring that your goal is SMART.

- **Specific:** the specific idea I will write/section/paragraph I will work on is ...
- **Measurable:** I will write _____ words
- **Achievable:** this will be a rough draft/quick bullet points for me to work up later/polished final version/edited final draft
- **Relevant:** where this section will fit in is ...
- **Time-bound:** I will write for 1 hour.

Step Two: Freewriting (8 minutes)

You wouldn't run a marathon without warming up first (well, you'd be unwise to!). Similarly, diving straight into a piece of writing can sometimes feel a bit daunting. Freewriting is a great way of helping you settle down, get focused and think a little more about what you're going to write. For instance, you could use this time to plot out how you might structure your ideas in the section you've chosen to work on. Or you might use the time to help you decide which of your ideas to work on and develop further in the upcoming writing session.

Freewriting can be particularly useful if you tend towards perfectionism with your writing, as it gives you permission to write a messy first draft. This, in turn, can really help you capture your ideas without worrying that they're not "academic enough" (you can develop your ideas and polish your writing style in the editing stage).

The rules of freewriting are:

- Set a timer for 8 minutes
- Start writing whatever comes to mind about the section you're going to be working on.
- Write in full sentences

- Don't stop writing
- Don't look back or edit
- If you get stuck, write about that – why are you stuck? What would help you get unstuck?! You just might be able to untangle yourself!
- If you don't like what you're writing, write about why

Step Three: Review (2 minutes)

Look over what you've just written. What points could you pull out of your freewriting that you might use in your draft? Or maybe you've just used the 8 minutes to 'unload' any anxieties you have about your writing, which is perfectly fine – and very useful – too!

Step Four: Write (40 minutes)

Write for 40 minutes and work on your draft.

Just something to bear in mind: if you really like working in timed writing sprints, but there are days when 40 minutes seems too long or, indeed, when it doesn't seem long enough, you can always adjust the time to suit you. The important thing here is to break writing down into manageable chunks.

Step Five: Next Action List (2 minutes)

Use the final couple of minutes to leave notes to your future self about the next steps you need to take to progress this piece of writing. This helps you maintain momentum.