

Type 2 Writer's Block

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/type-2-writers-block/>

This entry is part 3 of 4 in the series [Writer's Block](#)

[Writer's Block](#)

- [Type 1 Writer's Block](#)
- [How to decide what to write about](#)
- Type 2 Writer's Block
- [Type 3 Writer's Block](#)

What is Type 2 Writer's Block?

I bet you've experienced writer's block (maybe you're experiencing it right now), but do you know *what kind* of writer's block? There are 3 basic types and for each of those, certain specific things you can do to overcome them.

If you want to know what kind of block you're dealing with and what to do about it, read on!

Let's pin down the typical symptoms and writerly problems that come with Type 2 Writer's Block, and then the various tools to overcome it. So what exactly is Type 2 Writer's Block? It's when you have been well underway with your writing and then, for some reason, come to a screeching halt.

You might have been banging out the pages for a while and then: it isn't coming anymore. The words won't come.

As with Type 1 Writer's Block, Type 2 Writer's Block can stem from *emotional reasons* or from more *technical reasons*. Writing is a soulful act, and so the process can be a very emotional one. But it's also a matter of craft, and that means there are technical aspects of writing that if you know to do them makes writing much, much easier.

I want to first address the technical aspects of the Type 2 type of block, because the fixes for them are

immediately actionable. If you are able to identify what technical aspects of writing you haven't been doing, then you can simply start doing that and your writing will jump forward to the next level.

NOTE: If you tend to get blocked earlier in the process – essentially not finding the time or the inspiration to get started, then you have [Type 1 Writer's Block](#). [Read about that here](#).

So: let's get started. First, we'll identify the 3 technical problems that create Type 2 Blocks.

If you find yourself hitting a wall smack in the midst of writing the actual story, a few things could be happening:

- 1. You've no idea what to write next because you've forgotten a detail** and can't find your notes on it and so you must go back to the beginning of the story to track it down. In a few moments, I'll show you how to fix that.
- 2. You're not sure how to bring the story from where it is to the next stage.** You're not sure what the next scene should be or maybe you're not sure what the character should say in a particular moment. I'll show you how to deal with that kind of problem too.
- 3. You've run out of gas and you can't stand the thought of writing another word** for that story. If it's really bad, you might actually feel instant stomach cramps and a pounding headache just from glancing at your computer.

This third reason is the cause of Type 2 Writer's Block that is actually physically painful, so I want to address this first.

Believe it or not, this isn't a problem of discipline. You probably berate yourself for not being able to knuckle-down and just do it. Write. But it isn't always possible to simply, "sit down and write."

Even though that's logically exactly what we need to do, it just doesn't happen that way sometimes. Don't make the mistake of emotionally banging yourself up about it. That doesn't help you to sit and write any sooner.

Riding along in a guilt trip will not help you finish your story. So don't take that route.

Completing a writing project has nothing to do with discipline, but in recognizing what's happening with you and your story when you cannot or are not writing. You know you want to *finish* this story, so why aren't you? That's what you have to ask yourself.

Maybe you were trucking along when all of a sudden it all **started to feel like work**. And then it became something that seemed almost impossible to get to – especially when you have so many *other* things that have to get done. And then, if you let it go for too long, it will become the story you never finished.

When a simple question of what to write next becomes debilitating, that means it's time to stop a

bit, step back and assess where you are.

First: stop and step back.

First, you need to get out of the house and do something completely different for a while. Get out of your head but also get out of your routine. Routine will only reinforce why you're stuck in the story, so don't do that.

Expose yourself to things you don't normally experience. Never been to the X Museum? Try it out. Never ridden a horse? Try that. Do something that is OTHER.

After that, get back down to your story and figure out what is lacking. There's always a reason for getting stuck mid-way, so I have a couple of concrete reasons and fixes for that. That brings me back to the first problem for Type 2 Writer's Block:

You've no idea what to write next because you've forgotten a character or story detail.

The more complicated your story, the more details you'll have devised for it. Even if you're writing stories for kids, details can add up over time, especially if you're writing a children's book series. Character details, location, culture – the works.

On which side does Al's uncle have a limp? This is the sort of tedious writing decision that can interrupt your writing flow – sometimes indefinitely.

Don't let this happen to you. Even though many successful writers do have an eidetic memory (and you might have it too), there are times when we're feeling tired or rushed or have just hung-up after an exhausting phone call with Aunt Sue and what was that thing I was thinking before?

You really cannot rely on memory because there's no way to know where your head will be when you have the time to sit down and work on your story. You've got to use a really good filing system.

I don't mean a shoebox. I mean an actual system that enables you to find any detail you might need within a minute.

[You can use my system, if you wish.](#) This is the best way, I find, to keep track of story details. But you certainly don't have to use my particular filing method, so long as yours is functional.

What to keep in mind as you create a story filing system is that there are two key things you'll need to do with those files:

1. Don't throw out any notes or scraps of anything with notes on them.

The reason for this is because the physical note – the scrap, the napkin or coupon – whatever it was you used, will be a tangible reminder of where you were and what you were doing when you first had the

idea. This helps give your Idea Notes greater meaning to you, and you can use that in your writing.

2. Organize your character files so that all the details of a specific character are kept together.

Keep the order of information types consistent from project to project. For example, you'll devise the eye color for every important character. That information should be located in the same place for every character file.

You don't ever want character details just thrown in as you decide upon them. You want to be able to determine the detail at will and then place the detail in the right order. If you can establish this kind of consistency in your story filing, then you'll never again have to search for a detail for more than a minute.

We've addressed the problem of getting stuck or even stopped because of a forgotten story detail, and also about how to deal with stomach cramps.

There's another reason we tend to get writer's block in the middle of writing a story: it's when you just don't know what should happen next.

This is the most difficult writing problem to overcome and it's also very common. In this kind of situation, there is really only one thing to do.

While this is a much deeper problem, it can be avoided by taking a simple step. It isn't writing chapter outlines. Though that is something I highly recommend; there are writers who can manage to write their way to the end of a story without an outline.

No, this kind of block can be overcome by using a writing tool that most writers don't even know about. I'm talking about choosing your Themes.

Themes as a word is used pretty loosely and often, so let me first explain what I mean. Themes in a story are the two things about life that are most important to the main protagonist. There must be two.

A road trip story (which is a genre, not a type of plot) is often about things like: Identity, Loyalty or Hope. These single-word themes are what actually establish the purpose of the story being told at all. In the earliest stages of your outlining a story, it is essential to decide – very conscientiously – what the themes of your story should be.

Here are just a few more examples of possible themes:

1. Spirituality.
2. Family.
3. Honesty.
4. Honor.
5. Bravery.

You must pick two: a primary theme and a secondary theme. One can be the main idea behind the A Plot and the other lead the B Plot.

If the two themes for a character are Family and Honor, this will drive and perhaps cause conflict for the protagonist because these themes will deeply affect the decisions he or she makes.

What if we change just one of those themes? If instead of Family and Honor we choose Family and Spirituality - the character's decisions change. Enormously. Theme impacts the plot like nothing else.

When we read a story that falls flat, or that we just don't care about, it is most oftentimes because the writer neglected to choose a theme. The theme is the purpose. Without a purpose to a story, we just don't care.

Knowing and purposely determining the two most important things to a protagonist are what will inform every decision you make as the writer. It will prioritize the options for you. And that way, you'll never get stuck not sure what should happen next. The character's priorities will tell you what has to happen.

Remember: plot is NOT about what happens to a character. A mishap might well affect your protagonist and the other characters as well, but plot doesn't happen at that moment. Plot is what happens when the character makes a decision to do something as a result of that mishap. Plot is about decision-making.

Chances are, the themes you choose for a protagonist are ideas or priorities for you as well. Deciding on themes that you care about will translate onto the page, because you'll be writing about something deeply important to you. And that kicks down walls.

Next, I'll be writing about Type 3 Writer's Block, which is when it hits towards the end of your story writing.

When do you tend to get blocked? At the beginning, the middle or the end? I love getting feedback and personal stories from you, so don't hesitate to share!

Keep creating, no matter what.

This entry is part of the series

[Writer's Block](#)

Be sure to check out the other posts:

[<< How to decide what to write about Type 3 Writer's Block >>](#)