

# THE RELUCTANT WRITER

## CONFRONTING THE BLANK PAGE



Paralysis at the beginning of a project is one of the most common writing challenges. It's only made worse by the cultural myth of the "inspired" author, from whose fingertips fully-formed thoughts are supposed to flow directly onto the page. Unfortunately, many writers rely on this ideal, just sitting down and waiting for good ideas to materialize. Time pressure or insecurity about their ideas can also motivate people to skip pre-writing and "just get something on paper." But if writing an essay is like building a house (and, in a lot of ways, it is), this method would be like starting construction without a budget, a blueprint, or a foundation. Unsurprisingly, the resulting work (if there is any) usually lacks strength or interest.

The good news is that "drawing a blank" doesn't mean you lack the skills or ideas to produce good writing. First, try to connect with your subject: choose a detail you find genuinely interesting, aggravating, or perplexing. Give yourself time to read, make lists, map out your brainstorming process, and discuss your thoughts and questions with a (real or imaginary) reader. (These steps should be familiar to anyone who's worked with me!) As a "foundation" for your project, try to identify the three main rooms in the layout; i.e., the key concepts that you want your reader to come away with. This pre-writing phase is where your work derives its shape, substance, and functionality.

### AVAILABLE SESSIONS

#### WORKSHOPS

Sept 14 - Dec 11



Elementary School (grades 3-5):  
Mondays 3:30-4:30

Middle School (grades 6-8):  
Thursdays 3:30-4:30

A high school group is tentatively planned for Fridays 3:30-4:30.

#### INDIVIDUAL CONSULTING

Ongoing



**Daytime** – multiple time slots available between 8am and 3:30 pm for adult clients, home-schooled students, and students with early dismissal or free periods during the day.

**After school:** Limited time slots between 3:30 and 5:30; please inquire about current availability.

*Sessions take place at my Temescal office:  
510 49<sup>th</sup> St, #209 (@ Telegraph Ave)  
Oakland, CA 94609*

*If you're unable to find a time that works for you, please let me know. I keep a waitlist, and I may also be able to accommodate your needs with written feedback.*

## GOAL-SETTING FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR

The new school year brings the excitement of new projects, and the anxiety of old challenges. Faced with a slew of assignments, it's easy to get overwhelmed by the expectations other people have for your work. But what about your *own* goals? Instead of focusing on all the things your writing *should* be in order to please others, think about what your writing is like now, and what aspects you would like to improve on over the next few months. Having a realistic and specific goal that *you* care about will give you better results than trying to imitate someone else's example.