

# THE RELUCTANT WRITER

## UGLY SENTENCES



Most of us know that good writing doesn't just flow directly from the pen, fully-realized, on the first pass. We understand intellectually that there has to be a process of brainstorming, drafting, and editing in order to refine our thoughts and expression. And yet, almost every writer I talk to still has the feeling that she should be able to sit down and write complete, articulate sentences as soon as she sits down to work. The alternative – to write out ugly, inelegant phrases – seems deeply humiliating, like looking into a mirror and seeing a monster. As a result, writing projects can drag on without progress (and, ironically, the writer feels more and more humiliated!) It can be very hard to overcome the discomfort of “speaking aloud” in a way that sounds inarticulate, or doesn't accurately reflect one's thoughts.

I have several suggestions for dealing with this roadblock:

1. **Use scratch paper or a separate drafting document, which is for your eyes only, and give yourself permission to do some “ugly” writing.** This includes misspelled words, incomplete sentences, awkward phrases, stream-of-consciousness observations, and occasional swearing.
2. **Don't limit yourself to sentences.** You can start with a bullet list, a question, or even a drawing.
3. **Use brackets to indicate “words in progress.”** If you aren't sure how to phrase something, just include a note or paraphrase in brackets. This will help to separate awkward words from “you” as the speaker, and reminds you that you can refine them later once you've gotten the basic idea out.

Don't make articulate sentences a requirement for drafting! You have many other options that can free up your thoughts and get you started.

## CONSULTING

*I'm currently scheduling  
new clients for 2020!*

### Learning profile assessment

Identifies where writing challenges are coming from, and includes written recommendations for parents, teachers, and service providers.

### Creative projects

Book publishing, map-making, and diorama-building teach conceptual writing skills in the context of personal interests and goals.

### Homework support

Weekly planning sessions, detailed draft feedback, and skill-building workshops.

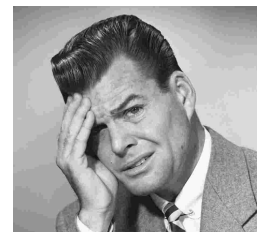
### Individual consultation for adults

Get unstuck with your dissertation or book project, or add clarity to your professional reports or website content.

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

## IEP SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

The IEP process is notoriously stressful and fraught with miscommunication. Not every team member is equally informed about the needs of the student, and parents are usually too overwhelmed to act as facilitators themselves. IEP



goals, adding to the confusion, are usually deficit-based, saying, “Joe should stop doing behavior x,” without understanding or treating the cause. I can help parents to review school assessments, along with their real-life understanding of their child's strengths and challenges, and articulate specific IEP goals that are strength-based and easy for teachers to understand and implement. I can also help parents to write a concise letter to introduce their child and his/her profile to teachers, in a way that encourages empathy and shows others how to be supportive.

## HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR THE NEURODIVERSE & THE WRITING-AVERSE

*During the holidays, I like to recommend gifts that encourage creative thinking, articulation, planning, and self-regulation. (I am not affiliated with any of these products or their vendors.)*

### FREAKY FIDGET



#### STRETCH X-RAY

Spice up your fidget drawer with Stretch Armstrong's arch-enemy! Great for sensory / tactile feedback (similar to the kind you'd get from putty or rubber bands), and for getting out some of your pent-up writing frustration. The material has a unique and addictive feel. Perhaps, like me, you've secretly wanted one of these since you saw the TV ad in 1976: "You can see his internal support systems!" Twist his arm, tie his legs in a knot, smush him in the guts...he probably deserves it. (\$17)

### SOUND FILTERS



#### VIBES HI-FIDELITY EARPLUGS

Many people with learning differences are sensitive to sound, and can find ambient noise distracting or irritating. Over-ear headphones are great for blocking out sound completely...but sometimes you need to hear what people are saying: in class, at film screenings, or around the house. High-fidelity earplugs reduce decibel levels evenly without muffling sound the way foam earplugs do. Unlike ear muffs or headphones, they're almost invisible, so you can wear them without appearing to be ignoring others. This brand is well-reviewed for comfort and sound quality. (\$24).

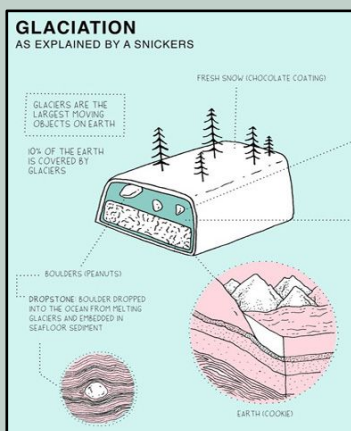
### ANALOG TIME



#### MINIATURE MODEL KIT

For people who hyperfocus on details, or who like to have concrete instructions or "recipes" for their work, this model kit would be a lot of fun. A build time of 24 hours (!) provides time to absorb the experience of organizing materials, pacing oneself through a long-term project, following directions, and creating physical objects. A great antidote to screen-time! Recommended for ages 14+. Library model is shown; other designs, including a cool greenhouse, are available. (Search Amazon for miniature kits with the keyword Fatbrain, Rolife, or Robotime; \$34)

## RECOMMENDED READING



**Seeing Science: An Illustrated Guide to the Wonders of the Universe**  
Iris Gottlieb

For visual learners: this book uses clear and compelling imagery to explain interesting science facts. The illustrations have a great way of synthesizing and highlighting the main conceptual theme of each entry. Accessible and interesting to all ages, from young kids to adults. (\$23)

**Comics: Easy as ABC! The Essential Guide to Comics for Kids**  
Ivan Brunetti

Despite its simplicity, this book is a thoughtful guide to writing and drawing comics for kids of all ages (probably best for ~6-14). The author is an expert teacher who really breaks down the form into functional components. A great visual way to think about writing style and structure. (\$10)

