

Specious Barrier #1: You need big blocks of time to write.

- accept that, with your class and work schedule, you will not likely have big blocks of time
- the secret to writing a lot isn't intensity: it's regularity

Why binge writing doesn't work (well):

- people who write regularly produce more pages and generate more creative ideas than people who binge write or write spontaneously (Boice, 1990, p. 80)
- binge-writing leads to poorer writing because it doesn't leave time to revisit and revise your work
- binge-writing usually happens under time pressure (i.e. right before a deadline), but thesis deadlines are too far off and thesis projects are too big for this strategy to work
- a binge writing session temporarily relieves pressure, but you've wasted emotional energy being anxious and guilty up to and during that session
- the emotions that accompany bingeing can interfere with clear thinking during that writing session
- binge writing usually happens during evenings, weekends, and holidays, which should be used for social activities, leisure, and LIFE

Specious Barrier #2: You need to do more research (reading) before you write.

- make writing a part of your reading: take notes, write summaries, and compose a few sentences that tie the reading back to your own topic *as you read*—don't wait
- your undergraduate thesis CANNOT and SHOULD NOT be an exhaustive study or literature review
- thesis writers often get too bogged down in source material and lose sight of their own project and voice
- just start writing: you'll be surprised at how much you already have to say about your topic

¹ Adapted from *How to Write A Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing* by Paul J. Silvia (Washington, DC: APA, 2007).

Specious Barrier #3: You need to wait for inspiration – you’re not “in the right mood” to write.

- you will never be in the right mood: academic writing is so unpleasant that no normal person will ever feel like doing it
- don’t confuse yourself with a poet: a muse is not required for academic writing
- choose to work on a task that does suit your “mood” or energy level that day: start with the section that you’re most interested in or that you feel most confident about. Remember: you don’t need to write your thesis sequentially!
- writing is a form of thinking: articulating one thought leads to another, so the best way to start writing is to start writing

The Myth of Writer’s Block

- writer’s block is not a state of being: it’s a behavior that can change
- your problem probably isn’t with the activity of writing: it’s likely a problem with one aspect of what you’re writing (e.g. order of info, transitions, maintaining your argument)
- specific writing problems can be solved—but only by writing (and by getting advice from your supervisor or the Writing Centre)