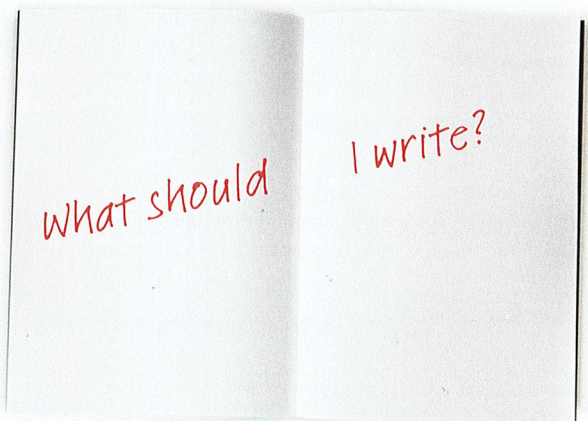


Where do I begin?

It is a daunting prospect starting to write down the results of all your reading and research.

We call this **BLANK PAGE SYNDROME**.

Below are a number of ways to overcome this problem.



Just get something down on paper, it is a start.

Make a large flow chart or diagram to summarise what you have read so far.

Write the ending first, what do you want your reader to know, what do you want to achieve?

Don't write your abstract or summary yet, wait until your project has evolved.

Think out loud as if you were explaining your ideas to a friend.

Go through your notes and see if you can sort these into piles. These could form the structure of your project.

Start with the bit you feel most comfortable writing.

Try to give each section a working title or subheadings.

Look at the exemplar projects in the appendix of this book to see how they are written and structured.

Change location - head out to a coffee shop, library or anywhere new. We associate places where frustration occurs with the frustration itself - change your place, change the frustration.

'Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.'

Benjamin Franklin (1774)

Set achievable objectives

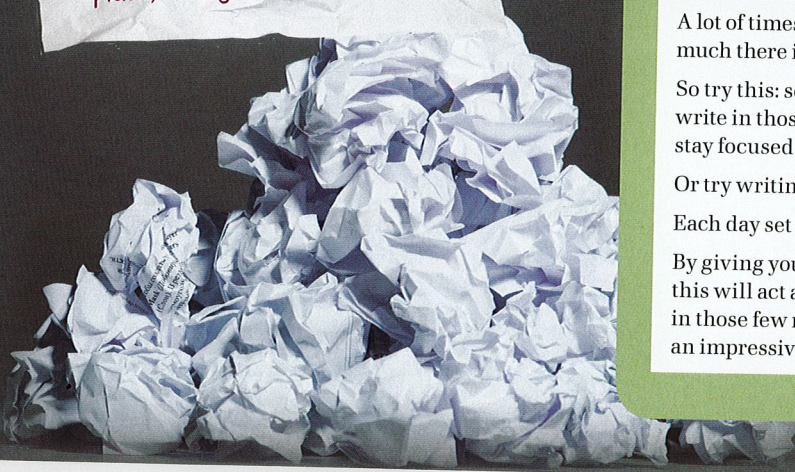
A lot of times we worry about how long it will take us to finish and how much there is to do. This may prevent us from starting in the first place.

So try this: set a timer for three minutes, and see how much you can write in those three minutes. Write gibberish if you must but, if you can, stay focused and know that you can stop in three minutes.

Or try writing just five sentences.

Each day set yourself achievable goals.

By giving yourself achievable goals that you can quickly accomplish, this will act as a motivator. A lot of times, you will write something even in those few minutes and be able to keep on going until you have made an impressive start.



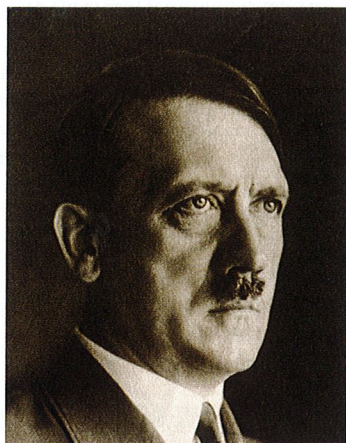
Overcoming the blank page syndrome

The blank page syndrome is the same thing as authors often refer to as 'writer's block'. Some writers find themselves staring at a blank page and wondering where to start. Although genuine writer's block is more than just getting beyond the blank page, many writers often find themselves staring at a blank page and wondering where to start.

Here are some examples of how students overcame their writer's block.

EPQ project 1: The impact of the French Revolution on British politics 1789–1848.

The history of political thought is intriguing in particular the impact of the French Revolution on British Politics. I found a wide research base that was quite overwhelming and really didn't know where to start. So I placed all of my notes into a pile and started to sort through these. I wrote down some possible subheadings for my essay. I then created an essay plan and a structural flow chart that helped me to organise the task of writing.



EPQ project 4: Why were all the assassination attempts on Hitler's life in the period 1921–1945 failures?

I have read quite a few books some of which were not entirely helpful. In order to help me in my research I drew up a large flow chart to summarise what I had read. I then divided the information up into categories such as the Valkyrie attack, Hitler's security team and so on. I think this will prove useful when I begin to write my final essay because it will be easy to distinguish what falls into each paragraph. So the flow chart could be structured as Valkyrie, other similar assassination attempts and minor assassination attempts.

EPQ project 2: To create a sculpture based on the history of the Warsaw ghetto.

I wanted my EPQ to combine architecture and history. When I stumbled across the story of the peculiar reconstruction of the Warsaw Jewish Ghetto I was fascinated to see how closely architecture and history are linked. I was struggling to come up with an idea for a possible model to symbolise the poverty and struggle of living in the ghetto. However, my eagerness to make the artefact symbolic as well as visually appealing blocked my creativity. I was able to overcome this by breaking down the planning process into visuals, functions and historical relations and by giving each section a working title and by doing this I could focus on one aspect at a time.

EPQ project 3: How far can it be proved that immigration from central and eastern Europe has benefitted the economy?

I tracked my progress by having an EPQ diary that proved a useful tool in helping me by setting myself achievable goals.

EPQ project 5: To what extent does England need new laws to be able to deal with defamation, abuse and contempt of court in relation to social media and the Internet?

I overestimated the amount of data available. I kept looking at my notes but got more and more confused about how to write the opening paragraph. I wanted something to capture the reader's attention to draw them in. I just stared at a blank page and just didn't know what to write. I was so frustrated and so I went for a run. When I came back I just started to write the opening paragraph that contained something I felt comfortable writing about.

Exemplars



EPQ project 6: Design a range of costumes for the witches in Macbeth with the aim of making the most effective design into a costume.

I had to think first about what I wanted to achieve, the bigger picture was to create an effective costume for one of the witches in Macbeth. As I have to write a report to accompany my artefact I need to properly record the physical process of creating my final design. I will therefore place the process in chronological order in my portfolio starting with the sketches of the images the process of creating the costume, fabric, etc., and then take a photograph of the model wearing the costume.

EXERCISE 4.1 Blank page syndrome

Consider how each of the students above has overcome the blank page syndrome.

Project	Way(s) of overcoming the blank page syndrome
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Suggested answers on page 124.