You are facing a blank sheet of paper (either physically before you or virtually before you on your computer screen). You must write a document (essay, lab report, memo, project report, thank you note, whatever).  **Now what?**

Writing strategies that often cause problems:

♦  Trial and error - Start writing with no planning or outlining

♦  “Perfect draft” block - The first draft must be so good that it can serve as the final draft

♦  Premature editing - Write one sentence, immediately revise it several times, write one more sentence, revise it several times, ...

♦  Waiting for inspiration - Maybe it never arrives!

♦  Avoiding it - Task becomes overwhelming as the deadline nears

♦  Trying to write the whole document at once - Overwhelmed again, break it into pieces (according to your outline)

“I  **HATE** writing!”

- Most engineers (Drs. Orkwis & Walker included)
Some good writing strategies (to avoid “block”)

♦ “Free write” - Write about anything that comes to mind


♦ Make a list - Key topics, key conclusions, key references, ...

♦ Revise the outline to contain more detail - Turn bullets into draft paragraphs

♦ Cubing - Describe, compare (to something else), associate (with something else), analyze, apply (or describe application), argue for or against

When revising your document:

• “What I Really Mean Is ...” or WIRMI

• “Satisficing” - Decide on minimum acceptable level of quality you will accept at that time in the writing process and STOP REVISING when you get there
1. Plan (consider audience, draft first outline, draft first schedule)

2. Gather information and resources

3. Revise and expand outline

4. Write! At first, write without judgment. You will fix it later!

5. Evaluate (might need to change outline again!)

6. Get outside feedback, if possible

7. Revise, revise, REVISE!

8. Edit

9. Proofread