

Four Unusual Steps to Overcome Writing Paralysis and Kick Your Career Into High Gear

By Mindy McHorse



Roughly seven minutes ago, I got the assignment to write this article.

Three minutes ago, I finished the outline.

And now here I am, pounding out the copy with the goal to be done in 60 minutes or less.

So it's ironic that my topic is paralysis by analysis when I appear to be trucking full-speed ahead ...

The reality is, I'm a recovering paralysis-holic. You know ... the type of person who is so overwhelmed with information, it's hard to take action.

Since I've figured out a way to un-do my "paralysis by analysis," it seems only fitting that I share some of the lesser-known ways of overcoming it, faster than you ever thought possible and with radical, life-changing results.

You'll find the steps I'm about to share will also kick your career into high gear.

It starts with embracing these four unlikely steps ...

Step 1) Pinpoint Your Specific Fear, Then Toss It Aside

A major step in moving past the chains from *wanting* to do something to *making it happen* is to face your fears.

Here are some of the common fears that maintain orbit around the freelance writing world:

1.

The fear that you'll make the wrong choice. The wonderfully trying thing about the world of paid writing is that there are just so many choices. And they're all solid, viable, interesting, money-bringing options. So how do you choose the right path?

Here's some great news: There's no such thing as the right path. No joke! Some paths may be better for you than others. Some may be more interesting, or might pay more.

But you'll never know what you like till you try it. Much like online dating ... no matter how giddy you get over someone's profile, you've really got to meet them in real life to see if they're a viable match.

Do the same thing with writing opportunities. Try the ones that catch your eye. Get your feet wet. Some you'll like better than others. Some will be a terrific fit right off the bat ... just like some will be an ain't-gonna-happen type of match.

For every option you try, you'll gain experience. And, YES — it's okay to use a sample from one niche or specialty when you're trying to land projects in another area. It's also perfectly okay to use a testimonial, or to have a client vouch for you from a totally different area than the one you may ultimately pursue. It still shows you have experience, and that you worked with another human who was pleased enough to vouch for you.

2.

The fear that you're not any good at writing. I'm betting you're a lot better than you think. Of the hundreds of articles I've reviewed as *Barefoot Writer* editor, just about all were decent. Some needed more revisions than others, but I never saw anything that was so flat-out appalling it couldn't be saved. So one of the lessons you've got to embrace as a writer is this:

No matter how good you are now or how much you've yet to learn, your writing can be improved by feedback.

Which means you don't need to stress about hitting it out of the park on the first attempt. It also means it'll pay off in spades to make friends with other writers and ask for peer reviews. Listen — even the greatest writers on earth have editors and beta readers. No writer is an island, despite the stereotype.

Plus, keep in mind that good writers are made, not born. Today's top 'o the heap writers will tell you they spend a massive amount of time reading and studying their craft. Celebrated writer Stephen King confesses as much in his

highly-regarded book, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. And he talks about all the other writers who do the same. So practice, and you'll get better and better.

Both of these fears can morph into huge mental roadblocks. But understanding them, knowing everybody goes through them, and that they won't ultimately hold you back will make for a huge leap in getting started on your writing career.

Step 2) Find Fuel in Big Motivations (Both the Good and Bad!)

Most of us hinge our paid writing goals on positive targets: *I want to break free from my day job, I want to make \$50K my first year, I want to send my kids to college without loans.*

And that's all good. But what about the things you *don't* want?

I'm all about staying positive and looking on the bright side and shining up problems with a Pollyanna attitude.

But I respond incredibly well to negative motivations. The idea of never paying off my debts is a tangible, black-hole kind of fear. The notion that my kids will resent and avoid me when they're grown and gone haunts me at three in the morning.

The way to avoid both of those from becoming reality is to get my act together now and aim high so I earn enough to cover my obligations and have plenty of time left over to bond with and be there for my kids so they'll want to come home for holidays even after leaving home.

Think about what's most likely to knock you into high-gear — regardless of whether they're positive or negative motivations. Whatever it is, use it to your advantage by putting it right up in front of you — either in pictures or words. Spell out what you want or don't want in life, and put it where you see it every day when you sit down to work.

Step 3) Apply the "Freshly Baked Accomplishment" Effect

I realize I made myself sound like a badass, pedal-to-the-metal writer in the opening of this article. And it's all true — I really did sit down and start it right away.

But I'll confess ... it came at a time when I was hemming and hawing my way back and forth across three confounding, large projects that are particularly daunting at the moment.

You should know I tossed those other projects aside and jumped on this with a singular purpose. I'll call it the "Freshly Baked Accomplishment" effect.

See, if you're having a hard time with one thing, it can be well worth it to push that one thing aside and do something different — something slightly simpler, and in this case, much shorter in word count and in the amount of time it takes from start to

completion.

Once you finish the smaller, easier task, it's a lot easier to step up to larger ones. You prove to yourself you can do it. You create an aura around your writing desk that permeates your self-confidence, much like freshly-baked cookies permeate a kitchen and make you want to branch out to baking larger, grander things, like holiday pies.

And that's another way of destroying analysis paralysis: Step back from the project you're struggling with and do something smaller, simpler, and ultimately achievable. Build from there till you get back to that project that tripped you up.

Step 4) The Smaller the Start, the Better (Possibly)

There's that old saying that "Rome wasn't built in a day."

Which is true, but of little help when you're in the midst of false-starts to your *writer's life*.

Everybody knows big achievements start with small actions. But what does that look like if you're just barely launching a career as a paid copywriter?

It might look like sitting at your desk and reading how-to articles for a day. It might look like writing 100 words in a whole day.

It might even look like steering clear of your writing space and spending the day meditating, exercising, or decluttering — because sometimes distance is exactly what you need to rev up your motivation for scaling a large goal.

Regardless of how you start, and regardless of what you might be resisting, approach the challenge with gratitude. Because at the end of the day, it's a thousand times better to have too many options than it is to have just one or two that aren't right for you.

You'll find your way. We all do. It won't look like anybody else's chosen writing path, and it may not look anything like what you thought it would be (that's my situation for sure).

But if it carries you to the other side — to a place where you have the space and time to pursue your own definition of freedom, where the pleasurable act of writing is the means to get there ...

Then I guarantee it'll be worth the effort, and that you'll come out on top in the end.

Have you suffered from paralysis by analysis? Share in the comments below where you feel you run into trouble so we can help.

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7 Responses to "Four Unusual Steps to Overcome Writing Paralysis and Kick Your Career Into High Gear"

This is quite helpful when you're just starting a novel!

Guest (TurkeyGirl) – over a year ago

Hello Mindy

Certainly do suffer from this. I put a lot down to my environment, where I seldom have anywhere quiet I can work, certainly no luxurious study. At present I am writing a children's book and re-reading the course on SEO writing and this is after learning about most things B2B from Steve Slaunwhite. It's the action bit...the jump I find difficult.

John

upmarket – over a year ago

I'm a mess. I have many interests and can't Settle on a niche. Then there's the fear factor. Fear of all possibilities.

I already live the writer's life, without the paycheck and very little glockenspiel. Aggh spellcheck! Glicken

Guest (Khemausetankh) – over a year ago

I love how you mentioned you started with an outline. That's always what gets me unstuck, especially on big projects. My biggest fear is always that my writing won't be good enough, no matter how many former clients have been thrilled with their results.

Wendy Strain – over a year ago

As Mindy stated, it's just starting, with both feet to the fire. I'm going through the accelerated classes myself and just need to continue to plow through so I learn how to get clients and then please them to keep them. I feel that I am a decent writer, I love writing, but getting started is mind-boggling.

Guest (Tracy) – over a year ago

Just what I needed to read this morning. That longggggg sales letter I am trying to write for Accelerated Copywriting is bolluxed up! How many benefits can you think up for a dog treat??? And how big of a big idea does it have to be? And what is the RIGHT promise? And I have MOUNDS of research.... So, today, I will just do my free writing for 30 minutes, organize an outline... and write my letter manana...

Guest (Elizabeth) – over a year ago

So this is my first day on awai I'm horrible on the computer or laptop, I just freeze so,therefore I have written and published my first book,and manuscript on my smartphone, investing in this writing club is a means to a end.To published my manuscript " My name is Nevaeh ".

My Name is Nevaeh is the title of my manuscript – over a year ago

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