

APSU Writing Center

Using Writing to Manage Stress

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“It is not what you write or what you produce as you write that is important. It is what happens to you while you are writing that is important. It is who you become while you are writing that is important.” - Louise DeSalvo in *Writing As A Way of Healing*

Feeling Overwhelmed by Assignments? Writing Can Help!

- With deadlines piling up, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed, anxious, or unsure of where to start. Did you know that writing can be a powerful tool to manage these feelings? When you write, you give yourself a space to reflect, process emotions, and express how you feel—without judgment.

Here are some simple writing strategies that can help reduce your stress and get you back on track:

• Free Writing

- Set a timer for 5-10 minutes.
- Open a Word document or grab a piece of paper.
- Start writing—anything that comes to mind. It doesn’t have to make sense. Ask yourself:
 - Why do I feel stressed?
 - Is the assignment deadline too soon?
 - Am I confused about the instructions?
- This helps clear mental clutter and gets your thoughts organized.

• Journaling

- Journaling helps you reflect on your day or week. It’s like having a conversation with yourself.
- After class or at the end of the day, write a short paragraph about how you’re feeling:
 - Do you feel confident about your assignments?
 - Do you need to brainstorm with a tutor or visit the APSU Library for resources?
 - What went well today, and what didn’t?
- This helps you track your emotions, making it easier to spot patterns in what’s causing you stress.

• Gratitude Lists

- Writing down things you’re grateful for shifts your focus from stress to positivity.
- At the end of each week, write down 3-5 things you’re thankful for:
 - Did you pass a quiz or turn in an assignment?
 - Did you have a productive study session?
 - Maybe something simple—did you enjoy a great cup of coffee or tea?
- Focusing on small wins can help you realize there’s always something positive, even on tough days.

• Mindful Writing

- Write down what you want to achieve. Why is this assignment important? What are your long-term academic or personal goals?
- Reflect on what you’ve already accomplished. What have you overcome to get this far?
- This type of writing helps you stay grounded and see the bigger picture, especially when you’re feeling overwhelmed.

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- **Plan Your Next Assignment**
 - Taking a few minutes to plan can reduce the pressure of last-minute work.
 - Write out the steps you need to complete your next assignment:
 - Break it down into smaller tasks: research, outline, draft, edit, and final review.
 - Assign yourself mini-deadlines so you can complete the project in chunks instead of cramming at the last minute.
 - A plan helps you feel in control, making large tasks feel more manageable.
- Writing can be a powerful way to manage your stress, especially when deadlines and assignments start to feel overwhelming. Whether it's a quick free write, a gratitude list, or planning out your next big project, writing gives you space to breathe and reflect. Remember, it's not about what you write, but about giving yourself the mental space to process and feel in control.

References

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