What to Do When You're STUCK

Find out WHY…

Am I BORED?	Am I DISTRACTED?	Am I ANXIOUS or OVERWHELMED?
You may be thinking:	You may be thinking:	You may be thinking:
"This is stupid."	*"I can't think in here!"*	*"I can't do this! It's too hard!"*
"Why is this even important!?"	*"It's too noisy!"*	*"I can't do it perfectly!"*

Try a WHAT …

Do I need to inject interest?

- ask to change the format so long as you meet the assignment criteria *(e.g., "can I make a comic?" "What if I create a documentary instead of writing an essay?")*
- ask to change the topic *(e.g., "can I write on ___ topic instead?")*
- relate the topic to an interest in your mind *(e.g., "it's like a Pokémon!" or "this historical figure reminds me of ___)*
- try to work in a funny or random word
- imagine being the most thorough but boring professor of this subject and deliberately hand in the most thorough but boring project of all time

Do I benefit from body doubling?

- work with a partner of your choice
- talk your plan for the day through with someone
- work side-by-side with a friend or family member *(it doesn't matter what they are working on!)*

Do I need a change of scenery?

- take a short movement break *(e.g., walk, jumping jacks, push ups)*
- move to another place to work, wherever you are comfortable *(not so comfortable you fall asleep!)*
- close your eyes and think of your happy place for a few minutes
- look away from what you are doing toward another spot of the room
- look out the window
- take a shower and then come back to work

Do I crave less chaos?

- clear off your workspace the night before
- only have one task in front of you at a time
- use a desk carrel with sides so you can't see around you
- wear noise-cancelling headphones
- work alone or in a quiet space

Am I confident I know what to do?

- take 7 deep breaths and re-read the instructions
- use a text reader like Speechify to read the directions to you as you follow along
- highlight or underline key instructions
- ask for help on concepts you don't understand
- ask your teacher to help you break it down
- set an earlier deadline and ask your teacher for feedback on your first draft

Can I visualize the end product?

- imagine what your final product will look like
- think it through backwards. Picture the steps you will take to finish the task
- ask for clarification from a teacher or peer by putting into your own words what is expected
- ask to see an exemplar
- sketch or mind map it out!

Do I **need a happiness hack**?

- curate a playlist of music, podcasts, or soundscapes you can listen to as you work. Make sure the content does not distract to you.
- eat a favourite snack at the same time
- colour code your work or add illustrations
- talk it through with a friend
- take a stim or dance break
- Google jokes about the topic
- commit to 1 daily self-care act *(e.g., a run, a bath)*
- reward yourself for getting parts done *(e.g., "I'll do Part A and then take a break to watch one episode of The Good Place")*

Do I **need more challenge**?

- ask your teacher if there is something harder to do for extra credit
- make a song out of the topic!
- create a fake time crunch *(e.g., "I'll get ___ amount done by 5 p.m.")* and tell a friend your goal
- give yourself mini time challenges *(e.g., "how many questions can I answer in two minutes?" or "can I finish this paragraph before the kettle boils?")*
- agree on a challenge with a peer *(e.g., "let's see who can work in the most hidden references to ___!")*
- assign an imaginary life or death scenario to completion of the task *(e.g., "this will help the Avengers get an Infinity Stone from Thanos!")*
- Focus on learning a new skill *(e.g., "I hate this topic, but I'd like to learn Photoshop so I'll make an infographic.")*

Do I **need controlled inputs**?

- pause periodically for a body scan *(e.g., "does my body need anything right now? Food? Drink? Eye break? Movement?")*
- eat a snack and get a drink for cognitive energy
- do a progressive muscle relaxation or stretch
- take a stim or dance break
- listen to music or a podcast *(if that works)*
- use a fidget or doodle while thinking/planning
- turn out/down the lights or wear shades
- sit under a weighted blanket while you work
- cover the questions/to do items you are not working on so you can only see the task at hand

STRATEGIES THAT WORK FOR ME

Do I **know where to start**?

- break project down into a to-do list and assign a little each day until the project is due
- write down a few options you could start with on post-its and draw one out of a hat
- think of the next smallest action you can take *(e.g., get out a pencil)* and do it
- write without editing – stream of conscious – about your topic for two minutes
- briefly make a mind map of the concepts related to your task or topic to clarify your ideas
- your last task: set or review the next day's goal

Do I **need to pace myself**?

- use self-affirmations *(e.g., "I've done hard things before!" or "one step at a time!")*
- break it down – you don't do it all at once
- give yourself credit – thinking is work, too!
- set a maximum time limit for working
- use a reminder timer for breaks and body check-ins *(but change the sound to something relaxing!)*
- use the Pomodoro technique or a YouTube channel or app that structures work and breaktimes for you *(but make sure your break activities are easy to stop when time is up!)*
- ask to do fewer questions, so long as you show you can do it *(quality over quantity!)*
- remember "best" effort isn't meant for all tasks – save energy for what's most important. Allow yourself to put less effort in on daily homework!