Have you seen anything like this before? For the third time during the writing block, a student gets up from his desk (again!) and goes to get a soda. Another student sits quietly at her desk, beginning to write on a blank piece of paper (trying to fly under the radar). And there’s the student who claims to have completed the writing task, but it’s obviously unfinished and disorganised. Does this ring a bell? All of these indicators point to failing writers.

Not all struggling authors are the same, just like our students. Some students have difficulty writing because they are at a loss for words. You know the kid who says, "I don't know what to write," then shrugs and looks at you blankly. Students getting up to get another drink of water and staring at a blank page are also common. These students find it difficult to get started and determine what to write about.

Others fail because their writing is unstructured and disorganised. These students write regularly, but their work is disorganised and difficult to follow. They also claim to have completed a writing assignment before it is fully finished. Finally, another group of students has difficulty writing because they are dissatisfied with the task. They may think it is irrelevant to them, or they may lack the requisite background information or experience to write about it.

There are several techniques you can incorporate into your writing instruction to better motivate your struggling authors with a little scaffolding and support
similar to what my past organisation Askmeoffers follow. Try the following scaffolding tips when students are having trouble coming up with ideas about what to write about:

1. **Share your ideas before writing**

Until writing, students orally exchange ideas (with a friend, as a group, or even record ideas using a technology device) to get their creative juices flowing. Students who are having trouble coming up with their own ideas may be motivated by the ideas of their peers. Allowing students to express their thoughts often helps to solidify and ground the concept so that it does not become lost.

2. **Write in a collaborative manner**

This is a chance for the entire class to participate. Instead of making students begin writing on their own, make them first collaborate as a team. To create a shared writing sample, have different students share their ideas. This shows how to tackle the assignment and offers them suggestions about what to write about for struggling authors.

3. **Use sentence starters in your writing**

These are fantastic for sparking ideas in stymied authors. A sentence starter will help direct students with their writing when they say, "I don't know what to write about."

4. **Getting ready to write**

This is a crucial step in assisting struggling authors in developing ideas. Help students produce as many ideas as possible by using methods like brainstorming or Concentration Storms. A young writer who is having trouble coming up with ideas can find the blank page intimidating. Brainstorming is a perfect way for authors to get all of their ideas out, and then a Focus Storm will help them coordinate and fine-tune them. This is also advantageous because it shows students that they have a lot of ideas. Students can refer back to their brainstorm and focus storm if they run out of ideas.

5. **Modelling and directed writing by the teacher**

Display models to your students before they begin a writing assignment (either teacher created, or exemplar student examples from the past). Additionally, if you're making a student write a hook, demonstrate how you'd write one to the class. This shows to struggling authors how they can tackle the same situation by thinking aloud. This is an excellent opportunity to inspire students to share their work. This also helps students who are stuck come up with new ideas.
6. Provide writing tools to the students

Students would have a resource to help them with their writing if they are given a writing toolbox. For example, offer students a list of transitional words and phrases to use in the writing they’re working on. Alternatively, provide students with a list of Dead Words to avoid in their writing as well as a list of alternative words to use instead. Giving students a resource to use when writing can assist them in resolving their writing difficulties.

7. Consults with students one-on-one and in small groups

Since students’ writing abilities and challenges vary so greatly, it's crucial to arrange time to meet with students in small groups or individually to recognise each student's strengths and weaknesses. Knowing which areas to concentrate on for each writer will allow you to scaffold and help each student in the areas where they will most profit.

As a writing instructor, my aim is to make all of my students feel confident in their writing abilities. I scaffold writing guidance to benefit all of my struggling peers in my current organization CouponsABC and outside, from those who have difficulty coming up with ideas to those who need assistance. I'd love to hear about any tactics you use in your classroom to support struggling writers!