# Phrases for Building Students’ Writing Stamina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Who Stops Writing Says/Does</th>
<th>Potential Response(s)</th>
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| “I don’t know what to write. I’m confused.” | - “If you’re confused, write down your question(s).” / “Jot down what’s confusing for you in the margin…” / “Try writing a sentence that starts with ‘I’m confused by.’”
- “Give me your best, even if you’re not sure it’s right.” |
| “My hand hurts! I need to take a break.” | - “The goal is to push yourself, so keep going—especially when it’s tough.”
- “If your hand hurts, that means you’re building stamina. That’s the goal, so keep it moving!”
- “In college, you’ll be expected to write for a lot longer. This is preparing you for that.”
- “You only have two minutes left to finish that beautiful start to your Everybody Writes. Don’t quit now!”
- “Everyone will get a break when the writing task is over. Until then, I need to see you writing. Thank you.” |
| “I’m done. I already answered the question.” | - “If you’re done, go back and check your work for ______ (spelling, grammar, etc.)”
- “It looks like you responded to the first part of the question but not the second. Reread the question to make sure you respond to both parts.”
- “Good. Now let me see if you can tackle this question: (insert Stretch it Question).”
- “Good. Now try to see if you can rewrite your answer using the sentence starter, ‘At first glance…”” |
| Engages in the “slow play”—continually writing a few words, then erasing them | • “I see that your pencil is moving, but you’ve only written X sentences in X minutes. You’ll need to pick up the pace if you want to finish.”  
• “I don’t want perfection, I just want you to show me your best. No need to keep tweaking it to make it perfect. You’ll have a chance to revise when you’re done.”  
• “This is just a first draft, so get all of your thoughts down and answer the question as best as you can. We’ll save revision for later.”  
• “If you’re having trouble getting started, try beginning your paragraph with the phrase “____________.”
| ...“What time is lunch again?” (or other off-topic question) | • “Back to work.”  
• “We haven’t started discussion yet, so keep writing.”  
• “Write first, and we’ll talk later.”  
• “What I asked you to do was respond to X question, so pick up your pencil and start writing.”
| Raises his/her hand to ask an on-topic question | • “When your hand is raised, your pencil should still be moving.”  
• “No need to stop writing to raise your hand.”  
• “I’ll take your question once I see you writing.” |