# Electronic writing

When we create text using pen and paper (or a typewriter) these traditional methods normally lead us into a linear writing strategy. That is, we are likely to generate what we have to say in a sequential manner. We write down a few words to start a sentence, then try to find the next words which will complete the idea we have in mind. Items are added until the statement is completed and the sentence is brought to an end. But very often we become 'lost for words', and the process comes to a halt in mid-sentence. This is the condition in which so many pencil ends are chewed, or paper is wrenched out of the typewriter. We stare at the blank sheet, wondering what to say next. There are often long and frustrating pauses when we are stuck in this way.

It is very common for people to adopt this approach to writing in which a second sentence will not be started until the first is finished. At each pause, the whole creative process comes to a halt. We may even have ideas about what we wish to say later in the piece of work, but it isn't easy to get these ideas onto paper. Instead, we are left searching for an appropriate word or wondering how to complete the current sentence.

Of course, there are exceptions. Some people have the intellectual strength to defeat temporary blocks. They go to another part of their text which is already outlined, then return later to the point where they left off. [This is one of the advantages of working to carefully designed plans.] However, such approaches are usually adopted only by the most confident and experienced. We know from the example of even prolific novelists that the source of fluency can easily dry up.

## Writing strategies

For less experienced writers, these alternative strategies might create even more problems than they solve. If your basic approach to writing is simple and linear, jumping to a new section of text is difficult. How big a gap should you leave? What are the arguments or the discussion that will eventually fill the space? The ability to move from one part of a text to another (particularly if it is not yet written) requires a confident grasp of its structure. Remember E.M.Forster's dictum: "How can I know what I mean until I see what I say?" You could of course just move onto a new sheet of paper, then fill any gaps later. However, these are not writing skills possessed by many beginners.