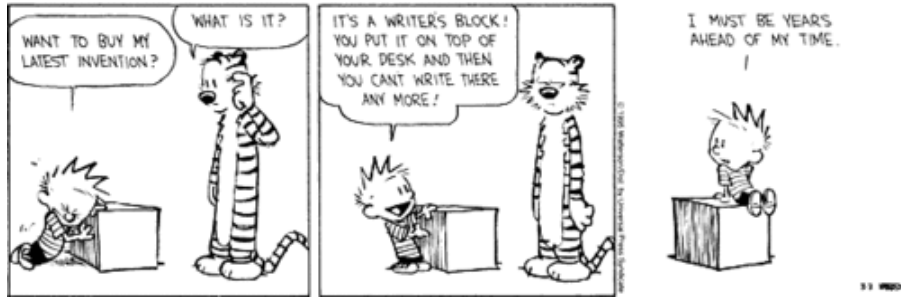


WRITING: GETTING STARTED



If you're having trouble getting started with a paper, here is a guide you can use in order to kick that writer's block and get yourself on track:

1. **Consider the purpose of your assignment/paper.** Will you be persuading your readers, informing them about something, using research to gain a new understanding of a topic, or something else? Be aware of what your paper needs to do (besides earn a good grade).
2. **Write down everything you know about your topic.** You can create a mind map, web diagram, or just free write to get some ideas flowing.
3. **Develop your opinion, stance, or new understanding as it pertains to the purpose of your assignment.** If you are persuading, which side of the debate are you arguing for? If you are informing, what is the main focus of the topic? If you're presenting research, what have you learned? This will determine the overall focus of your paper, and your thesis will grow out of it!
4. **Create a working thesis.** Keep in mind that theses can change. Writing is a dynamic process, and you may learn something while you're working on a paper that can change your specific focus. Use your thesis as a roadmap to what you include in the paper, and make sure it fits the purpose and focus of the paper as it grows.
5. **Identify the main points you will use to support your thesis.** Refer back to what you wrote in the second step of this guide. If you have points that overlap or complement each other, combine them. Eliminate points that don't relate strongly enough to your argument or stance. If you're having trouble here, try brainstorming again with your thesis in mind.
6. **Once you've identified your points, put them in order.** Try to organize them so that your paper will flow well and seem cohesive. Consider making an outline to guide you through the process of actually writing the content of the paper.
7. **If you've gotten this far, you have conquered the dreaded process of getting started, and should be ready to put the pieces together and start writing your paper.** Good luck!