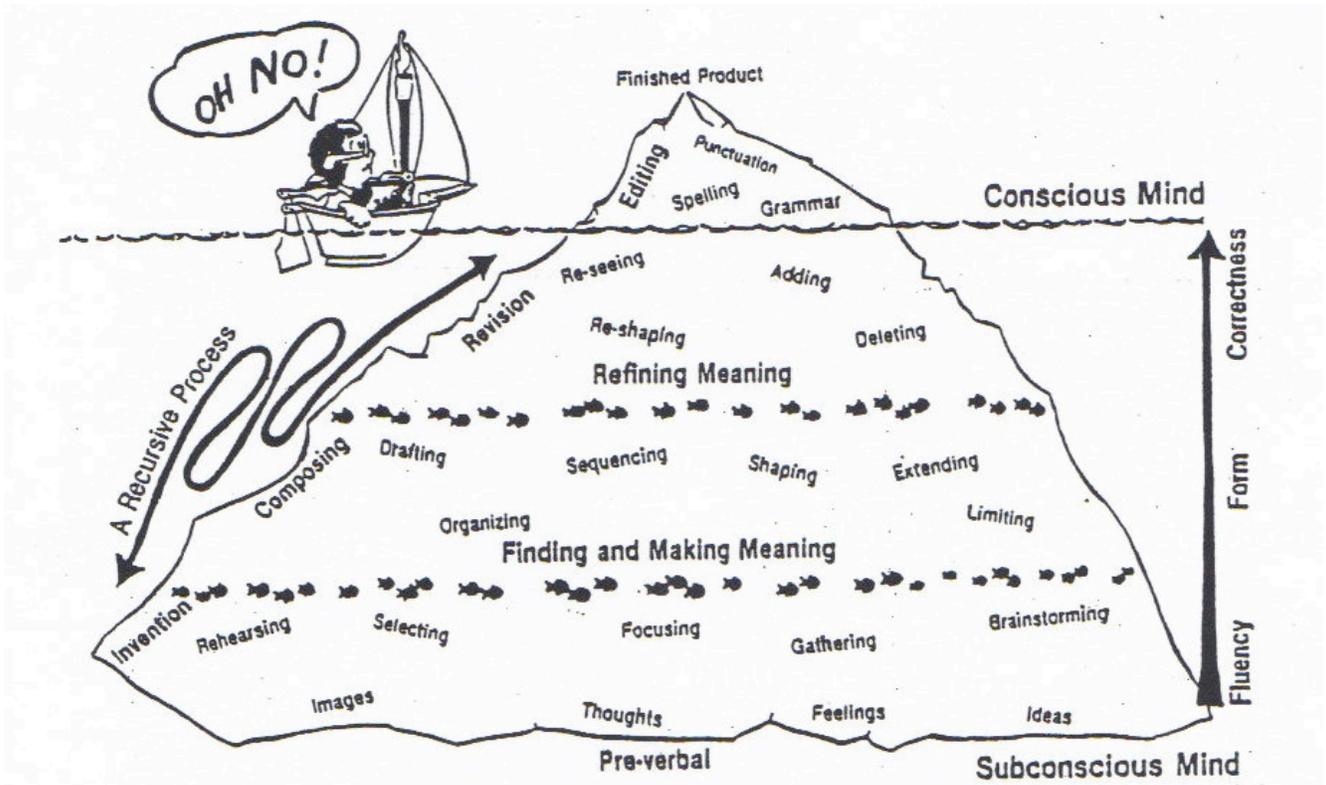


THE WRITING PROCESS:

The best writing is done, not last minute, but through a process using these stages:

- **Freewriting**: writing continuously letting thoughts unselfconsciously flow (often for about 10 to 20 mins) without regard to spelling, grammar, style etc., and no corrections are made. An excellent technique to push through writer's block and to explore a given topic.
- **Brainstorming**: is like freewriting in that you write down what comes to mind, but it is different because it is a list of words and phrases and not a string of sentences.
- **Journalist questions**: creating questions using: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, and How? Then, writing out sentences or phrases in answer, as they fit your particular topic.
- **Clustering/listing**: methods used to organize ideas. *Clustering* involves creating an informal map with your main idea in a center circle with the supporting ideas and evidence in circles connected to the main idea at the center. *Listing* is the most informal kind of outline in which you jot down your main points and possible supporting points and evidence.
- **Outlining**: a formalized, logical overview of an essay in "skeletal" form consisting of the thesis, the main supporting points, and the specific evidence used to illustrate and prove the supporting points.
- **Drafting**: using an outline and focusing on proving a main idea, compose the essay and include an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion. There will be multiple versions in the drafting stage as you get your ideas in the shape you want them to be.
- **Revising**: the larger elements of writing generally receive attention first—the focus, organization, paragraphing, content, and overall strategy. Revising usually deals with chunks of text longer than a sentence, and frequently can be quite dramatic. Whole paragraphs might be dropped, others added. Even the content might change dramatically, for the process of revising stimulates thought.
- **Editing/Proofreading**: checking such things as grammar, mechanics, and spelling. Don't edit your writing until the other steps in the writing process are complete.



WRITING AS A PROCESS NOT A PRODUCT

The iceberg diagram above gives a visual image of the writing process. Unfortunately, many “wreck” themselves by just focusing on the final product rather than process. This can give you writer's block and non-process writing is not going to be your strongest or best effort.

Pre-verbal, subconscious stage: The writing process doesn't start when you begin typing up your paper. The writing process begins as you start examining your feelings, thoughts, and ideas on a topic.

Invention: You move on next to invention as you start focusing your topic in your mind, gathering information as you discuss the topic with others, doing research, and brainstorming your thoughts using words and phrases.

Composing/Drafting: Then, you move onto composing/drafting. At this stage, you start getting ideas down on paper, extending some ideas, limiting others that aren't panning out. Many writers say that they didn't know what they thought until they saw what they thought. You might discover what you think as you write on a topic and your focus and argument might change and evolve as you write.

Revising: Once you have a draft of a paper, the writing process isn't over. The most important step is next: revising. Ask any professional writer and s/he will tell you that "the best writing is rewriting" (E.B White). In revising, you get to rework the ideas into a logical, clear, and creative paper. Revising involves global changes like moving paragraphs, deleting whole sections of text that aren't working,

and rewriting ideas to clarify them.

Editing: This is the final step. Unfortunately, many students have the false impression that this is the first and most important step. Editing is correcting sentence-level errors like spelling, punctuation and grammar. If you make the mistake and start out editing, you'll over-correct writing that may or may not make it into the final draft. Get your paper into the shape you want it and edit as a last step before you turn it in.

PLANNING:

A good early step in the writing process is planning. Access your writing situation by asking questions:

- Subject:** Is your subject worth writing about? How broadly can you cover the subject? Do you need to narrow it to a more specific topic? How detailed should you be?
- Sources:** Where will your information come from: Personal experience? Direct observation? Interviews? Questionnaires? Research? Course readings?
- Purpose:** Why are you writing: To inform readers? To persuade them? To entertain them? To call them to action? Some combination of these?
- Audience:** How well informed are your readers about the subject? What do you want them to learn about the subject? How interested and attentive are they likely to be? Will they resist any of your ideas? How sophisticated are your readers?
- Length:** Are you working with any length specifications? If not, what length seems appropriate given your subject, your purpose, and your audience?
- Deadline:** What is your deadline? How much time will you need to allow for the various stages of writing, including typing and proofreading the final draft?

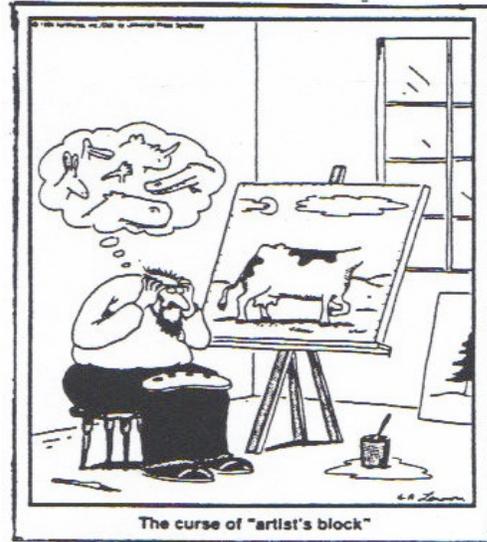
FREEWITING

A great place to begin after accessing the writing situation is *Freewriting*. Freewriting is writing continuously letting thoughts unselfconsciously flow (often for about 10 to 20 mins) without regard to spelling, grammar, style etc., and no corrections are made. This is an excellent technique to push through writer's block and to explore a given topic.

Since writer's block means that you aren't writing, one of the quickest ways to get around it is to write anything at all. You can write whatever you are thinking, feeling, wondering about, or trying to get *out* of your mind—just start writing. The only rule here is that you must *not* stop to correct spelling, grammar, or punctuation, or other parts of your writing. Set a time limit for yourself and just

keep writing. Let's say you were given the following writing assignment on the Gary Larson cartoon below:

Explain the intended humor of this Gary Larson cartoon. Why is it funny?



FREEWITING EXAMPLE

To help you get started, you might try freewriting first. Here is how some freewriting might look:

Okay—time to start writing—but what to write?? The cartoon is sort of funny, but so what? What could I possibly write about this? I really don't know. How am I going to write a whole paper on this! I thought it was funny, but I don't really know why. And I'll bet some people think it's stupid. What could I write? Maybe I could—no. Why do I think it's funny? Well, partly because I've been stuck just like the guy in the picture. I guess I kind of relate to him. But it's also funny because of the cow. I mean, anyone knows what a cow's head looks like, so why is this guy confused? Maybe that's why it's funny. He really shouldn't be confused. He hasn't even thought of a cow's head yet. I know some artists are tormented geniuses like Van Gogh but obviously not this guy. Also, I think the guy's appearance looks pretty strange. For artists I normally think of Michelangelo or Picasso, not this guy. He's really freaking out—bug-eyes—and he's just an overall strange looking guy. Also, he's making a big deal out of something so simple and obvious. I guess we all do that at one time or another. What about the caption? How does that add to the humor of it? I normally think of art as something more complicated than cows. Art is usually sort of lofty and grand and this cartoon seems to be making fun of that.