



Prewriting Tips

Sometimes the hardest part about a writing assignment is getting started; you understand the assignment, but that blank page in front of you seems so daunting. This is exactly why it can be beneficial to do some brainstorming activities prior to writing your paper. With this guide, you can hopefully get the ideas flowing from your head onto the page.

Listing

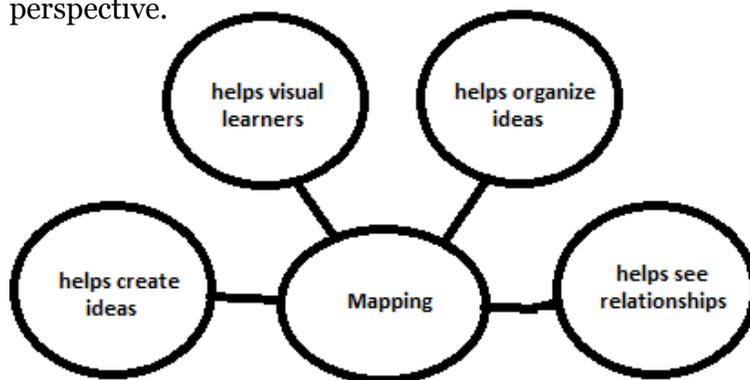
Make a list! Brainstorming is a way to let your ideas flow by simply listing all of the ideas that come to mind without letting yourself judge whether or not they are good. This can be a good method for coming up with ideas for topics for your paper or coming up with supporting ideas for your topic. Some good starting points for lists are:

- ◆ What topics could you write about most easily?
- ◆ What ideas will support your topic?
- ◆ What ideas do *not* support you topic?

Using multiple lists can help you see your topic from different perspectives, create a solid thesis statement, and help you organize your paper.

Mapping

When you are mapping ideas, you arrange them on the page so that you *cluster* related ideas together or connect them with a series of lines and circles. The middle circle is the main topic, and each idea surrounding it can be developed into a paragraph that is supporting it or coming from an opposite perspective.



Freewriting

When you are freewriting, remember to keep writing no matter what. The key is to write whatever comes to mind, not worrying about style or any surface-level issues, like spelling, grammar, or punctuation. It helps to set a goal; say you will write for 15 minutes or until you have filled 3 pages, and stick to it.

Once you've finished your set number of minutes or reached your page goal, read over what you've written. There will be a lot of filler that you can't use, but there can also be the beginnings to main ideas, and supporting evidence. Highlight those ideas so they can be used in your paper.

Quick Tip—If you can't think of anything to write, keeping writing "I don't know what to write" over and over again. Your mind will become tired of writing the same thing, so it will take over and open you up to new ideas and thoughts.



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Cubing

Like a cube is six-sided, cubing will result in six “sides” or approaches to your topic. On a sheet of paper, think about your topic, and write down what comes to mind in relation to these six prompts:

1. Describe it.
2. Compare it.
3. Associate it.
4. Analyze it.
5. Apply it.
6. Argue for or against it.

Once you’ve finished, read over the results. Is there a pattern or theme that is repeated? Which “sides” of the cube were most fruitful in writing about your topic? Could one or more of the sides help you write a first draft of a thesis statement?

Parts of the Whole

This technique is similar to listing, but more detailed. Create a table like the one below and fill it in. The “whole” is your main topic, “parts” are the main ideas about your topic, and “parts of parts” are the describing or supporting evidence for your main ideas. This will help you keep your information organized and it will ensure that your ideas are relating to one main topic. Fill in as many levels as you can, and use the strongest ideas to draft your paper.

Whole:	
Part 1:	Parts of Part 1:
Part 2:	Parts of Part 2:
Part 3:	Parts of Part 3:
Part 4:	Parts of Part 4:

Journaling

When journaling, you take on the role of a journalist and ask the “big six” questions used to thoroughly research a story: **who**, **what**, **when**, **where**, **why**, and **how**. Answer these prompts with sentences or phrases as they pertain to your topic. Once you’ve finished, consider the following questions about the prompts to direct or shape your paper:

- What patterns, relationships, or themes do you see?
- Which questions gave you the best results?
- Conversely, which hardly gave you any result at all?