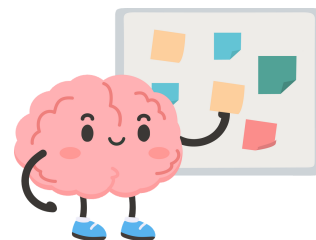


Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the **beginning stage of writing** when a writer comes up with potential topic ideas or avenues to explore in their piece.

Brainstorming can help writers **think of ideas, deepen their understanding of ideas, map how different ideas connect to one another, or develop an approach to a topic.**



Brainstorming Techniques

There are so many different ways a writer can begin to brainstorm. Listed below are a few different approaches to consider:

Freewriting

Freewriting involves **writing down any idea that comes to mind when thinking about a specific topic.** Oftentimes, the hardest part about brainstorming is thinking that all ideas must be well-structured, polished, and fully thought out; instead, freewriting encourages writers to take this pressure off and focus on recording all ideas. Even if you believe you are writing nothing, the writing process itself can create inspiration. Once you are done freewriting, review ideas that may have come up and highlight what seems potentially useful. It is okay if this process only resulted in a few ideas because you have begun the process of idea generation productively.

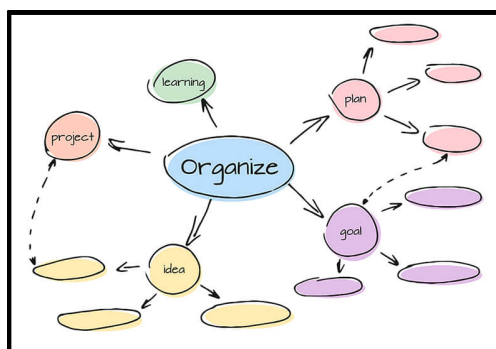


Black-Out Writing

Black-out writing is a strategy that can be particularly **helpful for the perfectionist writer.** To blackout write, writers can set their document to **black text and black highlight to hide the words.** Black-out writing eliminates the “fear of the blank page” and allows writers to write freely without worrying about how it sounds/looks. Like freewriting, this may not result in a full outline, but it provides some starting ideas.

Mind-Mapping

Mind-mapping involves creating a visual diagram that can help you draw links between ideas of interest. Begin with a general idea and create a web of understanding with subtopics of accompanying ideas. Mind-mapping allows writers to draw relationships between ideas or source material, color-code arguments, and create a universal understanding of their topic.



Brainstorming (continued)

The “Big 6” Questions

The “big 6” questions are used most frequently in journalism, referring to the **six most important aspects a story should address**. In brainstorming, you can ask yourself these questions to develop a deeper understanding of a topic and assess how much knowledge you currently have and what may require more research. The six questions are:

- Who: Who is being addressed? Who is this paper about? Who is at stake?
- What: What is happening or happened? What are the implications?
- When: When did or will this occur? Does this affect the future?
- Why: Why might this be happening? Why is it important to address?
- Where: Where does this topic occur? Locally? Globally?
- How: How does this occur?



Note that not all questions may be important to address in your paper, but this technique can help you think about how each has implications for the topic.

Consider Purpose and Audience

When starting a new assignment, it is important to consider the purpose of the piece and the audience it should be directed toward.

- **Purpose:** Think about what kind of paper you are writing. Are you arguing for something? Informing? Entertaining? Describing? This can help you narrow your focus during idea generation. The purpose of the paper is to help you think about how material should be structured and organized during drafting.
- **Audience:** Think about whom you are writing for. A professor? Students? A journal? Consider the knowledge they should have before reading your piece. For example, if you are writing to a general audience, it is important to explain what a book is about before engaging in a literary analysis.

Recording



Some of our best ideas can come out when we are not writing them down. Also, some people struggle to put their ideas on paper, but can explain them out loud. This strategy uses **audio recording yourself to talk through topic ideas and explain your thought process**. After recording, listen back and take some notes on what may be important to include in an outline. This is especially a great strategy for auditory learners.

Consider What You Are Interested In/Passionate About

While this may not always be possible in certain assignments, **writers should always consider writing about what they are passionate about**. If you already have an interest in a topic, the process of working through ideas will be less troublesome.