

Brainstorming

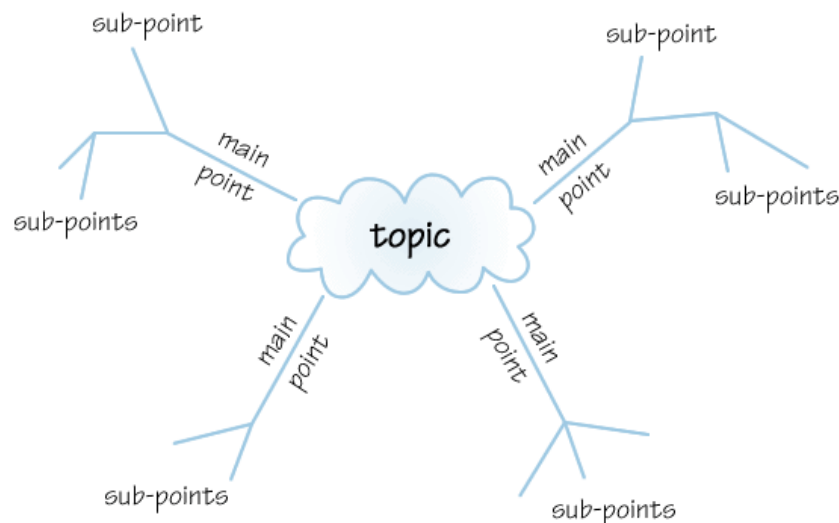
Brainstorming is an informal way of generating topics to write about, or points to make about your topic by capturing your first thoughts, usually on paper. You can brainstorm the topics for a whole paper, just a conclusion, or an example. You may have heard teachers refer to this stage as pre-writing because you have yet to flesh out a unified, detailed draft. You won't necessarily use all of the ideas you come up with, but it's helpful to have lots of ideas to choose from when planning your essay.

There are several brainstorming techniques. Here are some of the most commonly used techniques:

- 1. Listing:** Listing is probably the simplest prewriting strategy and is usually the first method writers use to generate ideas. Listing means exactly what the name implies—listing your ideas and experiences. It is best to use one-word concepts and short phrases. First, set a time limit for this activity; 5-10 minutes is more than enough. Then, write down as many ideas as you can without stopping to analyze any of them.

FOOD
DELICIOUS
HEALTHY
HAMBURGERS
DIET
CALORIES
FAT
PIZZA
NOODLES
COOKING

- 2. Clustering/mapping/webbing:** Drawing a map of your ideas is helpful in many ways. First, people often find that seeing a visual representation of their thoughts helps them to add more ideas and sort through them. Also, drawing a map might help you see how your thoughts connect to one another, which will help you when you begin organizing your essay. The image below is an example of an idea map.



- 3. Freewriting:** When you free write, you let your thoughts flow as they will, putting pen to paper and writing down whatever comes into your mind. The advantage of this technique is that you hide your internal critic and allow yourself to write things you might not write if you were being too self-conscious. When you free write, you can set a time limit and just write until you reach that goal. The crucial point is that you keep on writing even if you believe you are saying nothing. Word must follow word, no matter the relevance. You should not interrupt process until the end.
- 4. Journalistic questioning:** In this technique you would use the “big six” questions that journalists rely on to thoroughly research a story. **The big six question words are: who, what, when, where, why, and how.** Write each question word on a sheet of paper, leaving space between them. Then, write out some sentences or phrases to answer them, matching your particular topic. You might also answer into a tape recorder if you’d rather talk out your ideas.

References

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