



## **Brainstorming Techniques**

Brainstorming about a subject helps unclog thoughts, organize ideas, and find a focus. Here are some strategies to help you get started:

### **Researching**

- If you are unsure about what topic you would like to write about, consider conducting some preliminary research. Depending on what the prompt allows, you can read through social media posts, newspapers, databases, or even your class notes to find a topic or issue that you may want to write about.
- When you are searching for a topic, pay special attention to information that excites, angers, saddens, or thrills you. It is much easier to brainstorm a topic you are passionate about than one you are uninterested in.
- In brainstorming a topic, think about things you already know some information about, but want to know more about. Also, think about things you know little about, but are eager to have more knowledge on.

### **Freewriting**

- Once you have chosen a general topic, set a timer for 10 minutes. Write about your topic for that entire period. This does not have to be grammatically correct in any sense, it could be in list format, in paragraphs, you could jump from one idea to the next... this is just to get your thoughts flowing. If you find that you cannot write for the entire 10 minutes, write down questions that you have about the topic, or things you would like to explore.
- After your freewrite, you may see that your topic is too expensive, and you need to pick a narrower topic to focus your paper. On the other hand, if you didn't have very much to write, your topic might be too narrow, so you may want to consider broadening it.
- You may realize at this point that you do not know very much about your topic, and you need to conduct more research before you can organize your thoughts to write about it.
- If you find that you are very passionate about one particular aspect of your topic, you can make that your main argument. If you find you are not passionate about your topic at all, you may want to choose

a different topic that will keep your interest through a writing project. Also, at this point, you may find it useful to think about your topic from a different angle or perspective.

- In your freewrite, you may also start to see the beginnings of sub-arguments, ideas, or points that support the main argument you are trying to make.

### **Visual Webbing**

- Start with a blank piece of paper. In the middle, write your subject or topic.
- Draw 10 lines extending out from your subject with any kind of information connected to your topic at the end of those lines.
- Draw 10 more lines extending out from your subject! It may become difficult at this point, but keep forcing yourself to think of more connections; this may help you get to a really interesting and unique idea.
- Draw lines coming off your smaller lines. You want your connections to be comprehensive and far reaching.
- Now examine all of the information in your web of ideas. Note the areas that have interesting connections that may become good points and ideas for your paper. You will probably have many ideas that you don't need – that's okay! The point of this exercise is to get all of your ideas out on the paper so you can see them and the connections between them more clearly.

### **Conversation**

- A useful brainstorming strategy is to ask yourself questions (perhaps based off of the assignment prompt and/or in relation to your ideas and interests). Write down the answers to your own questions as a way to think through potential ideas.
- A useful brainstorming strategy is to think aloud. It is productive to brainstorm by having a conversation with someone else (perhaps a friend, peer, family member, mentor, or instructor). Find someone that you can bounce your thoughts off of as a way to clarify and develop your ideas for the assignment.