

Brainstorming Strategies

Brainstorming can help you develop the ideas you may potentially write about.

Freewriting	<p>Set an alarm clock for a specific amount of time (perhaps 10-15 minutes). Then write or type non-stop about whatever comes to mind about your topic. Do not worry about style, organization, grammar, or punctuation. Keep writing, even if you feel like you have nothing to say. When time is up, go back and read what you have written, and highlight or circle any ideas or insights that appear. You can use these to develop your paper and aid in your research.</p>
Clustering or Webbing (also called idea mapping)	<p>Take a sheet of paper and put your main topic in the center. Rapidly add sub-topics, concepts, or terms that relate to your main topic. Begin circling and connecting associated terms with lines, creating the appearance of clusters or a web. As you create your web, you may begin drawing conclusions about how to approach your topic and what to potentially include in your paper.</p>
Journalistic Questions	<p>Ask the questions that journalists often ask when developing a story: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? Write out the answer to each question as it relates to your topic. As you look over your answers, use them to help frame your thesis and the organization of your paper. You may also discover that areas where further research is needed.</p>
Outlining	<p>Identify your topic or thesis statement. Decide what major points you would like to discuss in your paper. Under each major point, give some secondary or supporting details. Organize these points in a logical, numerical order so that they all connect back to your thesis or topic. Use this to help determine how you will develop and organize your essay.</p>
Round Robin (works for groups)	<p>Have one person put initial ideas on a piece of paper, then begin passing it around. Each member adds their own ideas, builds off the ideas of others, or responds to the ideas of others.</p> <p>Alternate: Create a large poster board with the topic on it. Give every member of the group some blank sticky notes. Each member writes down their ideas and sticks them on the poster. Contributors can also ask questions or provide answers to questions.</p>

	<p>Both methods allow group members to contribute their ideas anonymously, creating a safe space for everyone, especially members who may be shy or less inclined to talk.</p>
<p>Consider purpose and audience</p>	<p>Consider your answers to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is your purpose? What is the goal of your paper? Are you trying to persuade? Describe? Inform? Summarize? Analyze? Evaluate? Compare and contrast? ● Who is your audience? Besides your professor, who else may be reading your paper? What do they already know about the topic? What do they need to know? Do they already have an opinion about the topic, and if yes, what is it? Are they already interested in your topic? What do they value? What is important to them?
<p>T-Charts</p>	<p>T-charts allow you to think about two different facets of a topic; for example, their pros and cons, or advantages and disadvantages. Make a chart in the shape of a "T" and write down the areas you want to brainstorm at the top of each column. Then list out facts in each column. This can be especially helpful when writing persuasive papers.</p>
<p>Other Graphic Organizers</p>	<p>Graphic organizers can help you visually organize information and concepts in a way that makes sense. This can help you not only organize your ideas for writing, but also help you retain information for exams. There are several types. Below are a few:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● KWL Chart: Divide a paper into three columns. Put a K at the top of the first column and list the things you already know about your topic. Put a W at the top of your second column and list the things you want to learn about your topic. Put an L at the top of the third column and list the things you learned about your topic from your research. ● Venn Diagrams: This shows the similarities and differences between items. Draw two or more circles on the page, with parts of them intersecting each other. Each circle represents one item. Put the characteristics shared by each item in the intersecting part, and put the things unique to each item in their own circle. ● Timelines or sequence charts: Identify the steps in a process or event and put them in the proper sequence. ● Problem-solving organizer: In the top box, write out the main problem you are trying to resolve. In the second box, write why you think it is a problem in the first place. In the third box, write out possible solutions, as well as the pros and cons of each solution. In the fourth box, select what you feel is the best possible solution and the possible consequences of that solution. In the final box, you can make suggestions to further improve that solution. ● Fishbone diagram: Helps with cause and effect essays. Write how several causes lead to one effect, or how one cause leads to several effects. Details are listed in the visual of a fishbone.



Resources

Athuralyia, Amanda. "The Ultimate List of Graphic Organizers for Teachers and Students." *Creately*, creately.com/guides/types-of-graphic-organizers/

Indiana University of Pennsylvania. "Creating an Outline." *Kathleen Jones White Writing Center*, iup.edu/writingcenter/writing-resources/organization-and-structure/creating-an-outline/html

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "Brainstorming." *The Writing Center*, writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/brainstorming/