BRADLEY University

WRITING CENTER
● Cullom-Davis Library 311/312 ● 309-677-3254 ● bradley.edu/writeright ●

Brainstorming Strategies

Brainstorming is a process that can take place in the initial idea-forming stage of writing and bleed over into the outlining stage. It isn't really finished until you begin drafting.

Where do I begin?
- ❖ Topic (What am I writing about?)
  - ➢ This can be a prompt/idea/person/event, either something creative or from an assignment
  - ➢ This can be something that comes from notes taken over several classes or research that has been done throughout the semester (ex: a final paper/project)
- ❖ Purpose/Goal (What am I writing for? What do I want to accomplish with this writing?)
  - ➢ For fun?
  - ➢ Express?
  - ➢ Persuade?
  - ➢ Inform?
  - ➢ Present? (ex: a research presentation)
  - ➢ You will need to examine your assignment sheet closely and be sure to ask any questions of your instructor to make sure you are meeting the goals for an assignment.

- ❖ Strategies for Brainstorming
  - ➢ Freewriting: set a timer and journal about your topic. If you're writing about a text, report, or some other kind of media, write down your thoughts about it. If you're writing a more personal piece, simply journal about your memories or feelings. The idea here is stream-of-consciousness—don't think too much about what you're writing during this time; the goal is to just identify your initial thoughts.
  - ➢ Clustering: Once you've done some kind of journaling or listing freestyle, see if you can organize what you've written into a few groupings. These can help you see what subtopics or assumptions you'll need to cover, what research you may need to do, and how you might organize paragraphs as you move forward.

➢ Annotating: if you're writing about another text or article, mark it up! Studies have shown that writing notes on a hard-copy text vastly improves reading comprehension and critical thinking about what you're reading. Underline, use a highlighter, and make notes about your thoughts and ideas in the margin as you read. You can go back when you're done and use freewriting or clustering to help you expand and/or organize your ideas.

➢ Reading notes: divide a piece of paper into two columns. In the first column, write down any ideas or quotes that stand out to you from whatever it is you're writing about. In the second column, record your thoughts about that idea or quote. This works best when paired with annotating, as you can transfer what you've marked up on an article or report into manageable notes for yourself.

Still need help with brainstorming?

Make an appointment with the Writing Center!
Library, Room 311/312
www.bradley.edu/writeright