

Writing Center

Brainstorming

Brainstorming can help you get started on your paper and expand on ideas you already have. There is no one specific way to brainstorm. You just need to find what works for you. If you have questions about what the professor wants or the nature of the assignment, do not hesitate to talk to your professor. Below are some examples of brainstorming activities.

Mind Mapping:

- Identify possible topics for your paper. If more than one topic comes to mind, write them all down. When brainstorming, no idea is a bad idea.
- If you cannot come up with an idea, try writing a bullet-point list of all you know about the subject and see if you can pull ideas from that.
- Once you have a topic idea, start listing things you might use to support your claim. If you have more than one topic idea, this process can help you figure out which idea has stronger support.
- Repeat the process. List ideas, quotes, anything that you could use to support your ideas.

Reading:

- Reading through related material can spark new thoughts. Find solid research through the library, do a simple Google search just to get an idea of concept, and explore other people's ideas on the subject. Ideas will come to you while reading. Remember to write down your thoughts as you go and keep track of any sources you may want to quote or paraphrase from.

Free Writing:

- Free writing might work if you know what you want to say, but not how to say it. Free writing simply means that you write and do not stop.
- Don't try to find the perfect words. It's simpler to cut and change words later.
- Don't get hung up on writing your introduction and conclusion at this point.
- Don't think, just write. Once you have words down, you can edit. Getting your thoughts all out first can help to organize all of your options.

Expanding on ideas:

- Start asking yourself questions. Is everything clear? Can you define a term or an idea used in your argument? What does this mean? Why does it matter? Who is involved? How is this going to affect things?
- Think about what a non-expert in the field would need to know in order to understand what you are arguing. Make sure your argument is clear.
- Have a friend or tutor who knows nothing about the subject read the paper with you and edit your paper where they are confused or unconvinced.