

Essay writing activity

Planning helps you develop ideas for your essay topic and helps you narrow down a large topic or broaden a small topic. There are several pre-writing techniques, and two of these are brainstorming and clustering.

Instructions: When you get an essay assignment, try one of the planning techniques below. Read through each and then choose the one you like the most. (If you have no assigned essay, see the note at the end of page 2.)

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is writing down all the ideas that come to you about your topic. There is no right or wrong way to brainstorm; just write anything you think of on your paper - just get everything down!

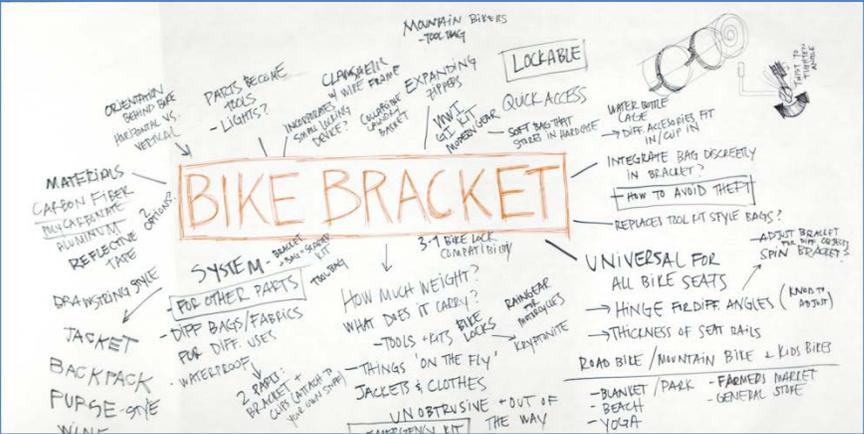
Step 1: Write your topic large on your paper.

Step 2: Write down as many words/phrases/sentences you can think of about the topic.

Step 3: Once you've finished writing down as many ideas as you can, see if your ideas have anything in common.

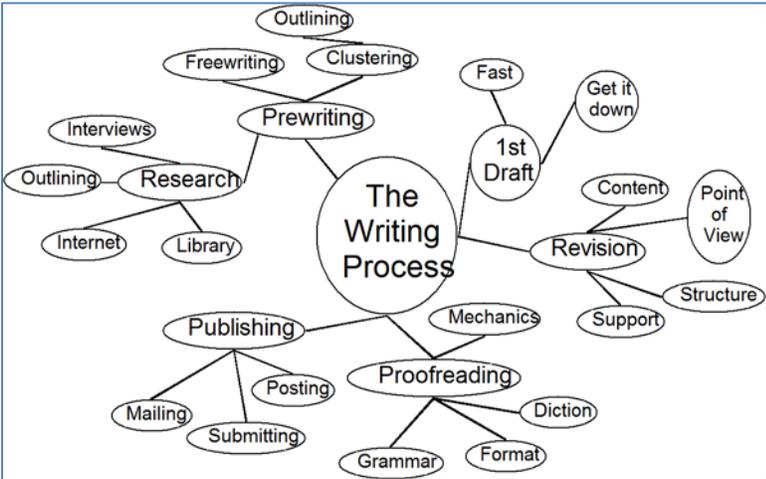
Step 4: Identify any similarities among your ideas and make several categories for them. Write those on another piece of paper.

Step 5: Look at your brainstorming list and lump your ideas into the categories you've created as you think they fit.



Clustering

Clustering makes an idea web. Once you have your topic, clustering can help you generate ideas about that topic and see relationships among your ideas. These relationships become categories which eventually could make up the body of your essay. Clustering also helps see the strong ideas that can structure your essay.



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Step 1: Write your topic down.

Step 2: Write down everything that comes to mind about that topic—just scatter the ideas all over your page and circle each.

Step 3: Once you've finished, look at what you've written and draw lines between ideas that share a connection. Any connection will do, as you can add new ideas to the cluster if you come up with more while you make connections.

Step 4: Single out ideas that have the most lines connecting them to other ideas. You should aim for three or more.

Step 5: Ask yourself what the relationships or connections are among the ideas you chose in Step 4; these become categories. Write three or more categories on a separate page.

Step 6: Beneath each category on the page you started in Step 5, write the ideas that you felt fell into each category. These categories and ideas can be used later to make up the paragraphs of your essay.

Note: *If you want to practise prewriting but have no essay assignment, choose one of the topics below and try brainstorming or clustering.*

Crime	Divorce	Peer pressure	Television and violence	Discipline
Drugs	Family	Family planning	Friends	Sports
Jobs and school	Loyalty	School uniforms	Suicide	Underage drinking

Adapted from *Writing Workshop Essays* <http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/engramja/exone.html>