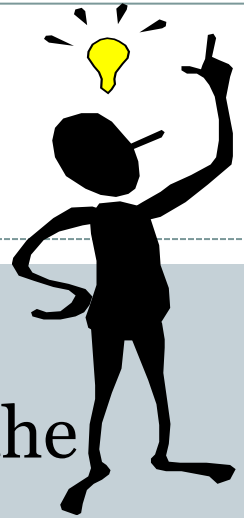


Prewriting Techniques



What is Prewriting?



- Considered the first step in the traditional writing process. It is sometimes referred to as the invention stage.
- **ANYTHING** you do before writing your first draft.
- Usually begins with you thinking about your writing purpose (what you are trying to communicate and why it is important) and audience (to whom you are trying to communicate).
- Can use some prewriting techniques to discern your topic and can also use some prewriting techniques to generate ideas about a topic.

Prewriting Techniques:



- There are a variety of basic techniques. Please note no single technique works for everyone.
 - Listing
 - Freewriting
 - Clustering
 - Scratch Outline



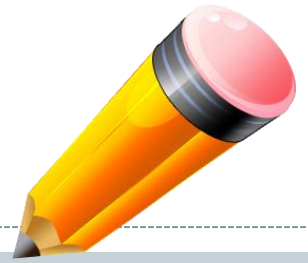
Listing:



- Jot down every idea you have about your topic. Free-associate; don't hold back anything.
- Try to brainstorm for at least ten minutes
- Write everything down in a list form.
 - This can be one word, a phrase, an entire sentence, or more.
 - Remember do no worry about grammar and spelling at this point, just get your thoughts on paper.



Freewriting

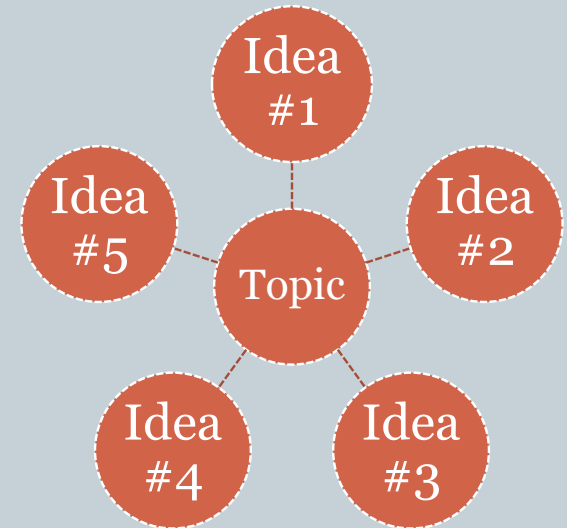


- Some people just prefer to start writing in order to find a focus for their essays.
- To get started:
 - Take out a blank sheet of paper or open a new word document
 - Begin writing for at least ten to fifteen minutes.
 - Write whatever comes to your mind about your subject.
 - Do not worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar.
 - Do not change, correct, or delete anything.
 - If you cannot think of something to write about, just write “I can’t think of anything to write right now; I’m stumped.”
Simply keep writing until a new thought comes into your mind.

Clustering



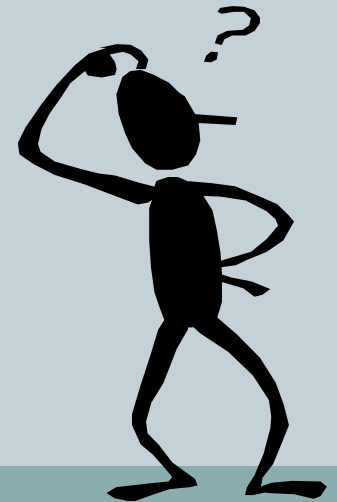
- This is a great technique for visual learners since this type of prewriting allows you to visually see how ideas can go together under each cluster.
- To get started
 - Place your general subject in a circle in the middle of a blank sheet of paper.
 - Begin to draw other lines or circles that shoot out from the original topic.
 - Cluster the ideas that seem to go together.
 - Try to do this for at least ten minutes.



Heuristic Methods



- The word has a broad definition used in many different fields, but in the writing world, it refers to a prewriting technique that involves asking yourself a fixed set of questions to generate ideas and information about any topic. (Only effective if you have your topic already.)
 - Journalists' Questions – Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How
 - Cubing
 - Tagmemics
 - Aristotles Common Topics
 - Dramatism





Cubing

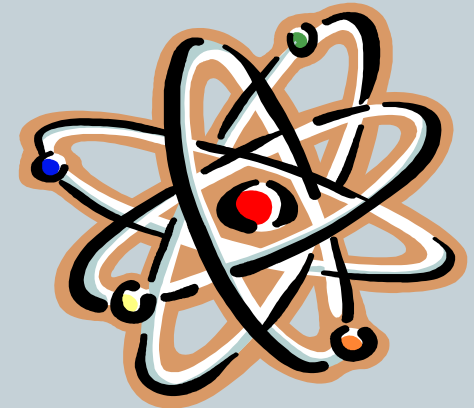


- Cubing forces you to look at a topic from six different angles, as if you were studying the six sides of a cube. The six angles are describing, comparing, associating, analyzing, applying, and arguing.
 - a. Describe it: What does your subject look like? What size, colors, texture does it have? Any special features worth noting?
 - b. Compare or contrast it: What is your subject similar to? What is your subject different from? In what ways?
 - c. Free-associate it: What does this subject remind you of? What does it call to mind? What memories does it conjure up?
 - d. Analyze it: How does it work? How are the parts connected? What is its significance?
 - e. Argue for or against it: What arguments can you make for or against your subject? What advantages or disadvantages does it have? What changes or improvements should be made?
 - f. Apply it: What are the uses of your subject? What can you do with it?

Tagmemics



- Another version of cubing, tagmemics also forces you to look at a topic from different perspectives: defining your topic as a particle (a self-contained object), as a wave (how it changes over time), and as a field (how it fits into the big picture).
 - **PARTICLE** (a self-contained X)
 - ✦ What is X?
 - ✦ How would you define X?
 - ✦ How would you describe X?
 - ✦ What are X's characteristics?
 - **WAVE** (an X that changes over time)
 - ✦ What is the history of X?
 - ✦ What was X like in the past?
 - ✦ In what ways is X different now from the past?
 - ✦ Are changes in X happening quickly or slowly?
 - ✦ What are the effects of X's changes on X?
 - **FIELD** (An X that is Part of a Larger Context)
 - ✦ How is X similar to Y?
 - ✦ How is X different than Y?
 - ✦ How does X fit into/be a part of/be important to Y?



Aristotle's Common Questions



- Aristotle used a series of questions for discovering more about a topic, which were organized into five groups:

1. Definition

- × How does the dictionary define _____?
- × What other words mean approximately the same as _____?
- × What are some concrete examples of _____?

2. Circumstance

- × Is _____ possible or impossible?
- × Who can do _____?
- × What would it take for _____ to happen?
- × What would prevent _____ from happening?

3. Relationship

- × What causes _____?
- × What is the purpose of _____?
- × What is the consequence of _____?
- × What comes before or after _____?

4. Comparison

- × What is _____ similar to and different from?
- × _____ is most unlike what or most like what? In what ways?

5. Testimony

- × What have I heard people say about _____?
- × Do I know any facts or statistics about _____? If so, what?
- × Do I remember anything I've read about _____ in books or magazines? Anything I have seen on television or heard in the news?

Dramatism



- Dramatism, invented by Kenneth Burke, treats a topic like a play with five dramatic elements: act (the what), agent (the who), agency (the how), purpose (the why), and scene (the where and when). These elements can be combined to inspire sub-questions. This resembles the journalist's questions and can be applied to many topics.
 - Act:
 - ✦ What is happening?
 - Agent:
 - ✦ Who is doing it?
 - Agency:
 - ✦ What method is being used?
 - Purpose:
 - ✦ What is the goal, intent, objective?
 - Scene:
 - ✦ Where and when is it happening?



Sources:



- Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *A Writer's Reference*. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. Print.
- “Techniques for Creating (Prewriting).” *Johnson Community College Writing Center*. 2010. PDF file.