



## COM 4: Brainstorming

Getting started is sometimes the most difficult part of the writing process. When beginning a writing project, brainstorming is crucial to generate and make connections between ideas. Brainstorming techniques are used when starting a project; however, they can also be used during the drafting stages to help generate new content OR to help you find connections between existing ideas. There are many techniques for brainstorming, and you should try multiple strategies to help you figure out which ones work best for you. Here are just a few:

- **Write on a topic or idea for a set period of time** without paying attention to organization, formatting, or grammar. Just write! And don't stop to check for or correct spelling or grammatical errors. This technique is often called **freewriting**.
- **Jot down key words or phrases related to your topic, regardless of whether or not they seem related to each other.** Circle each idea, and look for ways that one might connect to another. Draw lines to connect those ideas and take notes along the way. This is known as **mapping**.
- **Find someone to talk to about your idea(s).** Often, trying to explain an idea to a friend or fellow writer can help you discover new connections or "a way in" to your topic that you hadn't realized before. Feedback from friends can help you approach topics in new ways that you might not have thought of before.
- If you already have some ideas and need help developing them, **try creating an outline.** Start with the "big ideas," and list the smaller related ideas beneath them. Outlines can be formal or informal. If you don't have to submit your outline for a grade, it can be as brief or as detailed as you want it to be. The most important thing is for the outline to be useful to you. Once you've listed all of your ideas, this method is a great way to start thinking about logical order and organization, how your ideas are related, and how you will put them into your paper.

Remember, most brainstorming techniques can be used throughout the writing process. If you get stuck writing or develop a case of writer's block, return to these techniques or try a new one! Be sure to save your original brainstorming notes to refer back to later in the process if you need additional ideas and connections.

Use the following brainstorming activity to help you get started:



## University Writing Center

James E. Walker Library, Room 362  
615-904-8237  
uwcenter@mtsu.edu

### **Brainstorming Activity**

Have an idea for a paper topic but need help getting started? Jot down some ideas in response to these brainstorming questions and see what comes up. These big-picture questions might help you approach your writing project with clarity. When you are finished, talk over some of your ideas with a writing consultant.

**What's the end goal of this assignment? What do you hope to accomplish with this piece of writing?**

**Why are you writing about/discussing this topic in particular? What interests you the most about this topic?**

**What do you want audience to understand/think/feel when reading this?**

**What do *you* want to get out of the project? What do you hope to learn? What are the questions you want to answer?**

**Visit the Writing Center for more help on your writing project! Stop by LIB 362 or visit us online at [mtsu.mywconline.com](https://www.mtsu.edu/mywconline.com) to schedule an appointment.**