

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is the first step in the writing process. The purpose is to generate ideas and potential material, and then to begin refining those ideas.

During the first phase, keep these tips in mind:

- **DON'T** be afraid of imperfection. Trying to evaluate the worth of an idea at this stage will only limit your thoughts.
- **DON'T** go back to edit your ideas. You can do this after you've finished brainstorming, but during the process, just keep writing.
- **DON'T** worry about the final result. You're not there yet!
- **DO** experiment. You might be surprised at what you find.
- **DO** feel free to use any method that works well for you. This could mean writing an outline, starting with a thesis, using graphic organizers, jotting down ideas as they occur, talking through your ideas out loud, or freewriting.
- **DO** try to keep thinking and writing for a time even if it doesn't at first seem like you're getting anywhere - but then take a break. Brainstorming often works best in concentrated bursts.

Once you have a good amount of material, set it aside for a while, then come back to evaluate. Look for strong, coherent, relevant ideas that can provide a backbone for your paper. Group related ideas together, or try to relate all the parts back to a larger idea. You should be able to find at least the basic order and framework for a paper and have a clear idea of which ideas are most central. At this point, you are well along in the writing process!