

Stage 1: Pre-writing

The key to a great paper is in the planning. Before you sit down to write something, you need to figure out what you are going to write about. Most of us start with a topic, and then decide what we have to say about this topic. For an essay, you might generate a “working thesis” or a main idea that you would like to explore, and then start collecting information and ideas that relate to that idea.

Ways to Generate Ideas

- *Free write or use a journal
- *Brainstorms your likes and dislikes, and things, people, place, and hobbies that are important to you
- *Review assignments and discussion questions, and notes
- *Use graphic organizers
- *Participate in class or small group discussions; talk out ideas others
- *Determine the who, what, where, when, why, and how of a topic
- *Determine what you already know and what you still need to learn

Ways to Plan Your Writing

- *create a cluster, diagram, or web
- *create a storyboard
- *make an outline
- *identify pros and cons
- *list supporting arguments
- *sort and organize note cards by topic