BRAINSTORMING

WHAT IS IT?

Brainstorming is about capturing, creating, and making connections between ideas about a writing prompt or general topic. It is a helpful step in the writing process, whether you have too much information or too little, to either generate ideas or focus and organize a whole mess of them.

HOW IS IT DONE?

Let yourself jot down whatever comes to mind about a topic without worrying whether or not it's a "good" idea. There will be time later to review the ideas you come up with during brainstorming. So, don't restrict yourself at this stage. Just get your ideas down and see where they lead you.

There's no one way to brainstorm a topic, but some of the most effective ways use visual diagrams to show connections between ideas and to group ideas together.

One of the most common visual techniques for brainstorming is the **Cluster Map**. Cluster Mapping (also called Mind Mapping) is used to gather your ideas into groups, which can help you figure out how to organize your writing project.

Keep in mind that this is only *one* example.

Not all brainstorming methods use visual aids.
For example, lists and freewriting are common techniques
for brainstorming.

Lists:
Much like cluster mapping, you can use lists to first gather and then group ideas. For example, you can have a "master" list of all the ideas you come up with connected to a topic or prompt, and then you can create other lists from that master list, which group related ideas together. In this way you can start to organize your ideas.

Freewriting:
This is a good way to just let your mind wander about a given topic. It is done without considering correct grammar or punctuation and without stopping to "think." You can set a time limit, say 10 or 15 minutes, to just write about whatever ideas come to mind about the topic. Then you can read the passage and highlight what seems most useful.

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