



Brainstorming Strategies for Writing

One of the hardest parts of writing for students, no matter the subject, is getting started. Once students know what they are going to write about and how, the process flows so much easier. Consider sharing these brainstorming strategies with your students to help them start writing.

Lists

Making lists helps students collect their ideas surrounding a topic. Whether solo or in groups, students write a topic at the top of a page and then shout out or write any words or phrases that come to mind in relation to it.

Questions

Questions are a great way to brainstorm a topic. What, which, why, where, who, and how questions help flesh out an idea and allow students to bring out the details of their topic and the direction with which to take it.

Research

Research is another idea generation strategy. Ask students to use the words/phrases generated from their lists or find answers to their questions. This shows whether their topic has substantial evidence or leads them to one that better suits their interests.

Discussions

Students often have ideas about a topic that they are not even aware of themselves. Having a discussion, whether one-on-one or in groups, about their topic or potential topics allows them to articulate their thoughts and build meaning, giving them motivation to get started.

Mind Mapping

When it comes to mind mapping, the student draws a circle in the middle of a piece of paper, writing their purpose in it, drawing lines to other circles that connect to ideas, and lines from those to further ideas. This helps to create different paths of organization for a topic.

Sources

1. Bennett-Gillard, Mariah. "Brainstorming: Making a List." The Writing Center at Portland State University, adapted from PSU Writing Center handout, March 13 2008, <http://psuwritingcenter.blogspot.com/2008/03/brainstorming-making-list.html#:~:text=Making%20a%20list%20can%20sometimes,without%20being%20critical%20of%20yourself>.
2. "Brainstorming Techniques." Writing Center, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, <https://ualr.edu/writingcenter/brainstorming-techniques/>