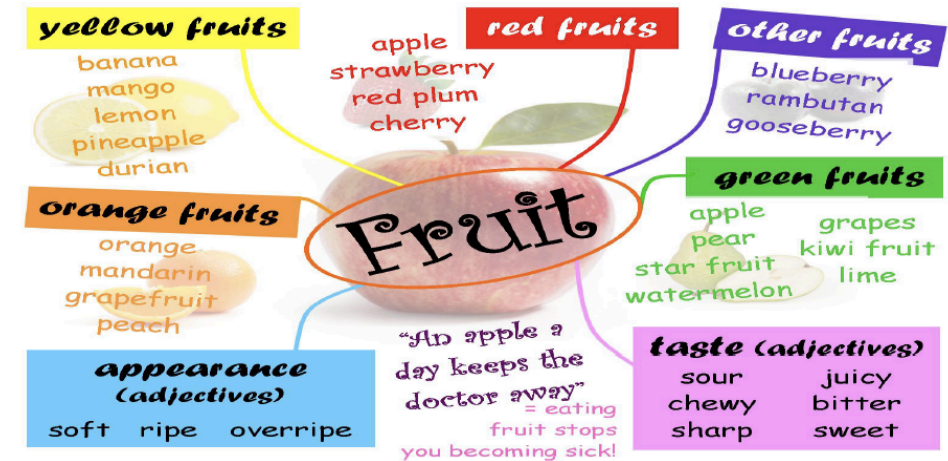


Brainstorming can help you choose a topic, decide how best to approach it, or deepen your understanding of its potential. Below are some useful techniques for brainstorming:

- **Freewriting:** Sit down and write whatever comes to mind, even if it's unrelated to the topic. The advantage of this technique is that you free up your internal critic and allow yourself to write and express things you might not otherwise be comfortable doing. It is often when our best ideas originate.
- **Source browsing:** The simplest way to brainstorm is to browse various guidebooks and reference texts, or surf their online counterparts. Do not rely on tertiary sources, but they can give you a broader direction for your paper.
- **Journalistic Questions:** In this technique you use the "big six" questions that journalists rely on to thoroughly research a story: Who?What? When? Where? Why? How?
- **Talking it through:** Speaking with another person--a classmate, friend, ULC tutor, etc.--about your topic can often help you develop ideas and provide direction for your paper.
- **Using Charts or Shapes:** If you are more visually inclined, you could use phrases or words that are central to your topic and try different ways of arranging them spatially, say in a graph, on a grid, or in a table or chart. You might even try using a flow chart like in the example on the next page.



Exercise (example on other side):

- Take a sheet of paper and write your main topic in the center.
- Moving out from the center, fill in the open space. Write down as many related concepts or terms that you can associate with the central topic.
- Draw a line connecting circles that seem connected.
- When you stand back and survey your work, you should see a set of clusters, or a big web, or a sort of map that may provide direction for your essay.

Brainstorming

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