

# Brainstorming Techniques

For Left Brains and Right Brains



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Brainstorming is a method students can use to generate ideas for writing an essay. In the process of brainstorming you should suspend any concerns about staying organized. The goal is to pour your thoughts onto paper without worrying about whether they make sense or how they fit together.

Because students have different learning styles, some students will be uncomfortable with the disorganized frenzy of spilling thoughts onto paper.

For instance, left brain dominant students and sequential thinking students may not benefit from the process if it becomes too cluttered.

There are more organized ways to brainstorm, however. For this reason, we'll explore a few ways to get the same results. Find the one that feels most comfortable to you.

## Brainstorming for Right Brains

Right brained thinkers are typically comfortable with a variety of shapes, ideas, and patterns. Right brains don't run from chaos. The artistic side of the right brain enjoys the process of creating--and it doesn't really matter whether they start with cluttered ideas or clumps of clay.

The right brain may be most comfortable with clustering or mind mapping as a brainstorming method.

To get started, you will need a few clean pieces of paper, some tape, and a few colored pens or highlighters.

1. Write your main idea or topic in the middle of the paper.
2. Start writing down thoughts in no particular pattern. Write words or passages that pertain to your main idea in some way.

3. Once you've exhausted the random thoughts that come into your head, start using prompters like who, what, where, when, and why. Do any of these prompters generate more words and ideas?
4. Consider whether prompters like "opposites" or "comparisons" would be relevant for your topic.
5. Don't worry about repeating yourself. Just keep writing!
6. If your paper gets full, use a second sheet. Tape it to the edge of your original paper.
7. Keep attaching pages as necessary.
8. Once you have emptied your brain, take a short break from your work.
9. When you return with a fresh and rested mind, glance over your work to see what kinds of patterns emerge.
10. You'll notice that some thoughts are related to others and some thoughts are repeated. Draw yellow circles around the thoughts that are related. The "yellow" ideas will become a subtopic.
11. Draw blue circles around other related ideas for another subtopic. Continue this pattern.
12. Don't worry if one subtopic has ten circles and another has two. When it comes to writing your paper, this simply means you may write several paragraphs about one idea and one paragraph about another. That's OK.
13. Once you finish drawing circles, you may want to number your individual colored circles in some sequence.
14. You now have a basis for your essay! You can turn your wonderful, messy, chaotic creation into a well-organized essay.

## **Brainstorming for Left Brains**

If the process above makes you break out into a cold sweat, you may be a left brain. If you aren't comfortable with chaos and you need to find a more orderly way to brainstorm, the bullet method might work better for you.

1. Put the title or topic of your paper at the head of your paper.
2. Think of three or four categories that would serve as subtopics. You can start by thinking how you could break best down your topic into smaller sections. What sort of features could you use to divide it? You could consider time periods, ingredients, or sections of your subject matter.
3. Write down each of your subtopics, leaving a few inches of space between each item.
4. Make bullets under each subtopic. If you find you need more space than you've provided under each category, you can transfer your subtopic to a new sheet of paper.
5. Don't worry about the order of your subjects as you write; you will put them into order once you have exhausted all your ideas.
6. Once you have emptied your brain, take a short break from your work.
7. When you return with a fresh and rested mind, glance over your work to see what kinds of patterns emerge.
8. Number your main ideas so they create a flow of information.
9. You have a rough outline for your paper!