

Faculty of Community Services

Academic Support & Resource Centre

Pre-Writing Strategies

COLLECTING IDEAS – DOING THE RESEARCH

- Before you organize your ideas, you must first *have* ideas
- Choose a general topic. Do some reading – use course documents, your textbook, and additional sources to get a sense of what others think about the topic you chose
- *Try brainstorming, free-writing, or mind-mapping to inspire your own ideas*

ORGANIZING IDEAS – BRAINSTORMING

- Start with a blank page. Write down as many ideas about your topic as you can think of within a time frame (try 10 minutes to start)
- Ask yourself questions as you write: Why am I doing this? Why do I like this? Why don't I like this? What is the most interesting thing about this field or issue? How would my audience feel about this? What can we learn from this? How can we benefit from knowing more? What do I already know about this topic?
- When you are done, check to see if there are patterns or ideas that keep arising; these repeated patterns or ideas are often clues about what is most important about this topic or issue

ORGANIZING IDEAS – FREE-WRITING

- A time limit is also useful in this exercise
- Using a blank piece of paper or your word-processing program, summarize your topic in a sentence and **keep writing**
- Don't worry about grammar or spelling, and if you get stuck, just write whatever comes to mind
- Continue until your time limit is up, and when it's time to stop, read over what you've written and start underlining the most important or relevant ideas

ORGANIZING IDEAS – MIND-MAPPING

- Mind-mapping will focus you on a **central word** (usually something that embodies a theme, topic, motif, etc. that is important to your ideas), which you then work-out by associating other words, thoughts, and ideas to that central word
- This may be a very useful technique for extremely **visual** people
- Be as creative as you want – just not at the expense of the ideas themselves! Using this technique allows you to very easily visualize all the ideas that are in your head
- Mind-mapping can include pictures, colours, or symbols to help you make connections between your ideas.

Further pre-writing resources (including those adapted for this handout):

Lahl, A. *Before you start writing that paper: A guide to prewriting techniques.*

Retrieved from <http://slc.berkeley.edu/you-start-writing-paper-guide-prewriting-techniques-0>

Learning Fundamentals. *Resources: Examples of Mind Maps.* Retrieved from

<http://learningfundamentals.com.au/resources/>

University of Maryland University College Effective Writing Center. *Prewriting and outlining.*

Retrieved from http://www.umuc.edu/writingcenter/writingresources/prewriting_outlining.cfm