PRE-WRITING STRATEGIES

Your pre-writing process will depend on your learning style, time available, and the complexity of the assignment itself. After you have utilized the Assignment Analysis Handout to outline the assignment requirements and expectations, try some of the methods below to gather and organize your ideas.

STRATEGIES TO GATHER YOUR IDEAS

❑ **FREEWRITE** for five minutes about your assignment topic without stopping to reflect on what you have written.

- Set a time limit, maybe 5 minutes. Give yourself a few sheets of blank paper and clear your mind.

- Once you begin, keep your pen moving the entire time. Write anything that comes to mind, and don't worry about correct grammar, or complete sentences.

- If you have read other texts to which you must respond, write your thoughts or recollection of each one. If you have trouble recalling, then reread the text and do a freewrite immediately afterward.

- Reread your assignment and look at your freewrites. What topics or ideas directly respond to or relate to the topic? Use one of the templates on the next page to help you organize ideas from your freewrite.

❑ **LIST** of all your different thoughts in response to the assignment. Try to generate as many different ideas, details, pieces of evidence or possible approaches to the problem as possible, including even ideas you would not use in the final paper. The goal is to list all the information and ideas you have on the topic.

- Begin with a few blank sheets of paper.

- Make a list of ideas related to the assignment. Do not use complete sentences— just write a few words that express the essence of the idea.

- Do not try to put things in order; just get all the different thoughts in your head out on paper—even those that don't seem useful.

- If helpful, start by answering the journalist's common questions about your topic: *WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHY, AND HOW.*

- If you are responding to other texts, make a list of the main ideas in each.

Once you have warmed up and gathered your ideas, it is time to start thinking about which ideas are most closely related to the assignment and to start distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details. Start by looking back at your pre-writing and identifying connections between ideas. Sort them into three or four basic categories that can serve as the paragraph topics for your essay. It is a good idea to do this using a visual template. Try one of the following strategies:

❑   Make an **OUTLINE** to sort main ideas from supporting details:

I.   Choosing a path after high school: college, work or travel?

II.   College

   a)   Preparation for career

   b)   Make new friends

   b) Expensive

III. Work

   a)   Begin earning sooner

   b)   Gain "real world" experience

   c)   Harder to advance without degree

IV. Travel

   a)   New perspectives

   b)   Easier to do when young

   c)   Nothing to show for it

V. Conclusion

❑   Use a **CLUSTERING** diagram to associate subtopics with your main idea. It might look like this: