

## Prewriting Techniques

### 1. Freewriting

Freewriting is just what it sounds like: writing freely. The important thing to remember about freewriting is that you write without stopping. Don't worry about grammar or punctuation. Just write whatever comes into your head for a certain period of time. Usually, three minutes is a good amount of time to start with. If you get stuck, write the same word over and over until you can think of something new to write. When you are finished, go back over what you've written and highlight some of the ideas you can work with. You may want to continue freewriting on those ideas for several more minutes, or you might want to move on to a different technique.

### 2. Questioning

Asking questions about your topic is another effective way to generate ideas: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Not all questions will fit all topics, and some questions might be more important than others--the important thing is to explore your topic. Questioning is, in and of itself, an open-ended activity, so this you might find yourself approaching a topic differently than you expected to--which is good! The point of prewriting is to start thinking about your topic and jotting ideas down.

### 3. Listing

Another prewriting method is listing all the ideas you have about your topic. After you make a list, try to organize your ideas and group them into categories. Eliminate any ideas that don't seem to fit or that seem redundant. Below is a short list for the topic "friendship":

Best friends  
Brings responsibility with it  
Enjoyable  
Similar interests  
Co-workers  
Acquaintances  
Childhood friends  
Compatibility  
Loyal

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4. Mapping (also known as "diagramming" or "clustering")

Mapping is a good prewriting activity if you are a visual person and like to see your ideas connected on the page. Start by drawing a circle in the middle of a blank sheet of paper. Write your topic in the middle of the circle. Then, draw lines and circles to any ideas about your topic that come to mind. See the example below:

