Brainstorming Techniques

Brainstorming techniques are most often used when starting a project; however, they can also be used during the drafting stages to help generate new content OR to help you find connections between existing ideas.

There are many techniques for brainstorming, and you should try multiple strategies to help you figure out which ones work best for you. Here are just a few:

- **Write on a topic or idea for a set period of time** without paying attention to organization, formatting, or grammar. Just write! And don't stop to check for or correct spelling or grammatical errors. This technique is often called **freewriting**.

- **Jot down key words or phrases related to your topic, regardless of whether or not they seem related to each other.** Circle each idea, and look for ways that one might connect to another. Draw lines to connect those ideas and take notes along the way. This is known as **mapping.**

- **Find someone to talk to about your idea(s).** Often, trying to explain an idea to a friend or fellow writer can help you discover new connections or "a way in" to your topic that you hadn't realized before.

- If you already have some ideas, and need help developing them, **try creating an outline**. Start with the "big ideas," and list the smaller related ideas beneath them. Outlines can be formal or informal. If you don't have to submit your outline for a grade, it can be as brief or as detailed as you want it to be. The most important thing is for the outline to be useful to you. See our handout on Outlining for more information.

- **Get to the heart of your project by asking questions**. What's the end goal of this assignment? Why are you writing about/discussing the topic? What do you want audience to get from your project? What do *you* want to get out of the project?

Remember, most brainstorming techniques can be used throughout the writing process. If you get stuck writing or develop a case of writer's block, return to these techniques or try a new one! And be sure to save your original brainstorming notes to refer back to later in the process. You can always mine those early notes for additional ideas and connections.

Want more help brainstorming? Check out these Writing Center resources:

Visual Writing Project Organizer
Outlining
Developing a Thesis Statement

Or, **let the Writing Center help!** Stop by LIB 362 or visit us online at mtsu.mywconline.com to schedule an appointment.