Brainstorming

Before you even begin writing your paper, you should engage in some form of prewriting to get your ideas down on paper. This is perhaps the most important step in the writing process, as it allows you to finally get started! In this sense, brainstorming also acts as an excellent antidote to writer’s block.

➢ And you really do need to get something down ON PAPER or, just as well, on the computer screen. This forces you to finally confront your ideas and to examine them for what they’re worth. If you simply just sit there and think and daydream about your topic, you might feel inspired by something—and this is a place to start—but you won’t actually be getting anywhere with your ideas until you put pen to paper.

Here are some brainstorming activities to get you started!

1. Freewriting
   ❖ Write your topic (or some word or phrase relevant to your assignment) at the top of your page.
   ❖ Go ahead and just start writing, without paying attention to grammar or style.
   ❖ Don’t worry if your thoughts lead you to other places—this is good! It is perhaps in these other places where you will find your research question or thesis, but you’ll never know if you don’t start!
   ❖ Keep writing until you just can’t write anymore. You can (and should) always come back later and start again!

   * A useful variation of this technique involves turning off the monitor or screen of your computer as you type. This will further prevent you from thinking about grammar and style, both of which really have no relevancy at this stage in the writing process (what’s the use of making something perfect now if you’re just going to change it or get rid of it later?).

2. Journalist Questions
   ❖ Ask who, what, where, when, why, and how about your topic:

   Technology
   Who does technology affect?
   What are the concerns of technological innovation?
   Where is technology most important in our lives?
   When will we have flying cars?
   Why don’t we have flying cars yet?
   How should societies negotiate ethical versus scientific considerations?
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3. Webbing/Mapping
   ❖ Create a visual representation of your thoughts and the connections between them.
   ❖ Put the main idea in the middle, or at the top, and draw other, smaller bubbles (or squares, or whatever) connected to it, each representing a supporting idea/detail.

4. Chart/Graph
   ❖ Write your word/topic at the top and add (logical or not) subcategories at the head of each column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital Divide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational geographical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>