

Five Invention Strategies for Writing

Inventions strategies help you get started with writing. They're strategies for exploring ideas, posing questions, considering connections, and beginning to write. If you're having a hard time getting started on a draft, or if you've already started but feel stuck, invention strategies can offer new and creative pathways into your writing.

1. Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a creative process where you take time to generate and list out many ideas. Keep these strategies in mind for brainstorming:

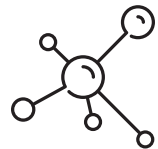
- *Get creative!* Generate as many ideas as you can—whether you're brainstorming topics, questions, keywords, genres, formats, etc.
- *Be open to ideas and write down whatever comes to mind*—even if it doesn't feel directly relevant or like it connects with your original thinking.
- *Focus only on generating ideas.* You can always narrow, make decisions, and figure out next steps after brainstorming.



2. Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is a visual activity: you identify one core idea or question at the center of a page or whiteboard and then branch from there with sub-points, supporting ideas, examples, etc. Try these strategies for mind maps:

- *Start broad and branch outward* to more specific details or examples.
- *Name connection points* (lines on the mind map) between ideas.
- *Use your mind-map to plan next steps* like making decisions about what content to include, highlight, or explain based on connections you've identified.



3 Freewriting

Freewriting is open-ended, exploratory writing – you go wherever your writing takes you. Here are a few free-writing strategies to try:

- Give yourself permission for open-ended, messy writing. This can help relieve pressure around getting the “right” ideas out.
- Focus on getting words flowing and developing momentum on a topic, question, or area of confusion.
- Write for 10 minutes where your only rule is to keep writing.
- Refrain from revising, deleting, or reviewing what you've written in the moment; go back later to look for key ideas or takeaways.



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4. Exploring Your Topic



Exploring can help you narrow a topic, find a new angle, identify a gap in research, or begin collecting sources you could use in your draft. Exploration is helpful for engaging with a topic in-depth before planning next steps in your writing process. Consider these strategies for exploration:

- Try to explore a variety of dimensions of your topic.
- Use a range of search tools like the Valley Library's 1Search, discipline-specific databases, and Google Scholar
- Identify as many different types of sources as possible such as journal articles, books, Wikipedia, websites, blogs, videos, news, and more.
- Catalogue ideas, write new questions that come up for you, or create a mind map to explore connections.

5. Talking Aloud — Dialogue



Dialogue provide space for open-ended thinking around a topic, and can often lead to clarity or identifying next steps. Here are some questions you could explore with a Writing Consultant or a writing partner:

- Who am I writing for and why?
- What is the most important thing I'd like to say?
- What writing process has worked for me in the past?
- Where does it make sense for me to start?
- What questions do I have or want to explore?
- Where am I stuck or confused?