

Four exercises in prewriting:

Focused Free writing

1. **Use a blank paper or computer screen** and set a time limit of 5 - 15 minutes
2. **Summarize the topic in a phrase or sentence;**
generate a free flow of thought
3. **Write anything that comes to mind**, whether on topic or off, for the period of time you chose,
4. **Don't pause**, don't stop.
don't rush; work quickly
5. **Don't review**
what you have written until you have finished
6. **At the end of your time**, refer back to the beginning:
Rephrase the initial topic
Repeat a word, phrase, or important thought or emotion that makes sense.
7. **Review:**
are there words or ideas you can grab onto for the topic?
Is there a main idea to this sequence of ideas?

Listing and outlines

This is a more structured and sequential overview of your research to date. You may also outline to organize topics built from free writing, brainstorming, or mind mapping:

1. Arrange items or topics, usually without punctuation or complete sentences
2. List topics and phrases them in a grammatically similar or parallel structure (subjects, verbs, etc.)
3. Sequence topics in importance,
defining what "level" of importance they are. Items of equal importance are at the same level

Example (using this web site):

Study Guides & Strategies

I. Preparing to learn

- A. **Learning to learn**
- B. **Managing time**
- C. **Setting goals/making a schedule**

II. Studying

- A. **Thinking critically**
- B. **Memorizing**
- C. **Organizing projects**

III. Writing Essays

A. Basics of essays

1. Prewriting

- a. Definitions
- b. Basics of prewriting
- c. Exercises
- d. ...

2. Rough drafts

- a. definition
- b. basics of drafts
- c. exercises
- d. ...

3. ...

B. Types of essays

1. The five paragraph essay
2. Essays for a literature class
3. Expository essays
4. Persuasive essays
5.

Brainstorming:

1. Use a blank paper or computer screen and set a time limit of 5 - 15 minutes
2. Summarize the topic in a phrase or sentence;
generate a free flow of thought
3. Write down everything that comes to mind to generate a free flow of thought:
 - Think of ideas related to this topic, the crazier the better: be wild and amuse yourself; eliminate nothing
 - Make up questions and answers about the topic, no matter how strange: Why am I doing this? What could be interesting about this to me? Why don't I like this? What color is it? What would my friend say about it?
4. Review:
are there words or ideas you can grab onto for the topic?
Is there a main idea within this sequence of ideas?

Mind mapping

1. Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words
2. Take a pencil (you'll be erasing!) and a blank (non-lined) big piece of paper or use a blackboard and (colored) chalk
3. Write down the most important word or short phrase or symbol in the center.
Think about it; circle it.

4. **Write other important words outside the circle.**

Draw over-lapping circles to connect items, or use arrows to connect them
(think of linking pages in a web site)

Leave white space to grow your map for

- further development
- explanations
- action items

5. **Work quickly**

without analyzing your work

6. **Edit this first phase**

Think about the relation of outside items to the center,

Erase and replace and shorten words for these key ideas

Relocate important items closer to each other for better organization

Use color to organize information

Link concepts with words to clarify the relationship

7. **Continue working outward**

Freely and quickly add other key words and ideas (you can always erase!)

Think weird: tape pages together to expand your map; break boundaries

Develop in directions the topic takes you--don't bet limited by the size of the paper

As you expand your map, tend to become more specific or detailed

<http://www.studygs.net/writing/prewriting.htm>