

Writing is a process.

Oftentimes, the process can be predictable, and it frequently follows a pattern. While all writers' processes will be different, the following are some methods that can be beneficial to generate ideas and begin the writing process.

FREEWITING

To freewrite, write continuously for at least a few minutes. Ignore spelling and grammar. It's okay to be sloppy, but **DON'T CROSS OUT** or **ERASE**. Just let the ideas flow. If you run out of things to write, describe your surroundings or the weather, anything that surrounds you.

LISTING

In listing, you write down your ideas in a column down the page. Like freewriting, don't stop. Keep your ideas flowing regardless of how good or bad you think they are. When you're done listing, pick out one of the better ideas, and work on a sub-list that explores more specifically the details necessary to develop the original idea more specifically.

MAPPING

Some call this a mind map. You start with a topic in the middle of the page, and circle it. Then as other ideas come to mind, write down and circle them, drawing lines to connect the idea bubbles together. Keep doing this until you run out of ideas.

KEEPING A JOURNAL

A journal is a great idea for expression of emotions or dealing with problems that may seem too difficult to grasp. You can view the journal as a diary if you want, but it doesn't need to be. You can use it to explore any ideas that come to mind: reactions to your drive home, an interaction you had at the store, or a means of improving a situation that you have witnessed.

The Basics of the Essay

PARAGRAPHS

A paragraph develops one main idea. An essay will contain different types of paragraphs: introduction, body, and conclusion.

- The introduction paragraph opens the essay and introduces the reader to your essay's main point, written as a thesis statement.
- The body paragraphs (there may be many) act as the core idea development section of the essay. Each body paragraph will start with a topic sentence, will contain support for the topic sentence (details that explain or prove the topic, maybe quotes from professional sources), and will finish with a concluding or closing sentence that completes the topic.

- The conclusion is the last paragraph and acts as the completion for the entire essay. Avoid the tendency to summarize the points you have made throughout the essay. Don't repeat yourself. Instead, think about the following three possibilities:
 - a warning
 - a recommendation or suggestion
 - a call-to-action

The above ideas are not distinct, and oftentimes there is some overlap regarding how your conclusion takes shape. Think of the conclusion as your reader's transition away from your essay. What do you want the reader to be thinking about as your essay closes?