BRAINSTORMING

Audience Analysis

Who is the audience for your paper? Is it your teacher, peers, or the general public? What can you, as a writer, assume that your audience already knows about your subject? What makes your approach unique? What areas may cause your reader to disagree?

Clustering

Draw a circle in the middle of a piece of paper and write your topic name inside it. Draw smaller circles around the topic and connect them to the main circle. Write whatever words or ideas logically come from or are related to the main topic in these sub-circles. Each sub-circle can have several connected sub-circles of its own. The idea is to build up information.

Double-entry

Draw a line down the middle of a page and list similar ideas and differing ideas. This is helpful for a compare and contrast or pros and cons paper.

Freewriting

Write your topic at the top of a blank sheet of paper. Begin writing. Jot down whatever comes to mind for a set amount of time (five or ten minutes to start). During this time, do not worry about grammar or content; just keep writing until time is up.

Keep a Journal or Diary

Keep a writing utensil and notebook or some blank paper next to your desk or work area. When thoughts come to mind about your chosen topic, make yourself a note. Important thoughts and information will not get lost and can then be used for later reference.

Listing

Compile a list of single words that come to mind when you think about your topic. Think about related words and list them also.

Mapping

Write your central idea and thesis down on the top of a blank page. Choose the three most important points you would like to make regarding your central idea. Branch supporting information off of each point until you have a "map" of supporting ideas.

Topoi

Consider questions based on classical Topoi of authoritative testimony, cause and effect, definition, difference, example, similarity, and statistics.

Authoritative Testimony: Who says it? Why is he or she an authority?

Cause and Effect: What prompted this result? What is the effect?

Definition: How would you define this?

Division: What are the parts and/or divisions of this?

Similarity and Difference: How is this alike? How does it differ?

Statistics: What numbers or data support your claim?

Who/What/When/Where/How

Identify *who* did the action (*what*), *when* they did it, and *where* it occurred. State *how* this made an effect. This method is very effective for narratives.