Prewriting Invention Strategies

Using Prewriting Invention Strategies

In the proceeding paragraphs, you will learn about prewriting and the various strategies, processes and question you should consider before you begin to write.

**Consider this. As you begin to start writing…**

* Does your mind draw a blank
* Do you suffer from ‘writer’s block’
* Are you having difficulty finding something of value to say

If you answer ‘yes’ to any of the above, you are not alone. It is common for writers to have these feelings at various times throughout their lifetime. However, over time, writers have developed proven strategies and best practices to help them put their best foot forward. If you find yourself faced with the challenge of not know what to say as you begin to write, you might try one of the following tactics.

**The Textbook Method**

* Draft your thesis statement
* Establish an outline
* Prepare the first draft
* Review, revise and edit as necessary

…however, if this does not help, there are several other strategies that you can try.  First and foremost, consider the actual purpose for writing. **Why are you writing about the subject or topic that you have chosen to write about?**

There are several things that you might choose to write relating to the subject matter, and each of these could be the ‘correct’ thing to write. However, in order to mitigate the risk of being too broad, you need to narrow down your writing choices. For instance, you might choose to write about the topic of ‘cafeteria food.’ From the start, before writing down the introduction, both you and anyone reading your paper is likely to be asking the same question – “What is the point?” Why should you write about cafeteria food and, more importantly, why would anyone care what you have to say about the topic?

Are you hoping that anyone reading your paper will empathize with you because of how dry the meatloaf is?

Are you hoping to compare the cafeteria food in your school to that of the food service in other institutions, like say a prison?

Are you hoping to investigate spending or food quality?

Next, you might consider asking yourself **how you will logically achieve your goal or purpose for writing.**

How do you intend to achieve your objective if you want to, let’s say, tell anyone reading your paper that **The Goonies** is the absolute best film you have ever seen. How are you able to define a tangible means of doing so? Would the commentary you leave about the film extend beyond simply telling anyone reading it that is was ‘really really awesome’ or would you contrast and compare other films?

Now you might decide to **brainstorm to get the creative juices flowing.**

Brainstorming allows us, as writers and students, to quickly come up with as many good or bad ideas, examples, strategies, or suggestions as possible. Maybe you can seek the assistance of a group of friends. Take some time to jot down anything that comes to mind, this includes ideas that might not make it further than the page – there are no bad ideas.

Pretend that you are part of a mock interview. This will allow you to consider the subject from multiple vantage points. What sorts of questions do you believe the other person (or people) are likely to ask? How would you teach a group of people about the topic?

You could also try to use diagrams or trees and outlines to help you to better view the topic in a more schematic manner. This could lead to your discovery that additional information or material is needed before you can begin your first draft.

In the following sections we will take a closer look at pre-writing strategies and what you can do to overcome these challenges.

Familiarizing with Prewriting Invention Strategies

Prior to being able to start any sort of academic writing, be that an essay, a research paper, a short story or even a dissertation, it is necessary to have a plan. The lengthier and more complex the finalized paper is intended to be, the more imperative it is for you to have developed a strong understanding of the intentions.

**The intentions are:**

* The subject matter and the specific topic to be discussed or written about
* The information you know about the topic
* The information that you believe to be true and valid
* Anything that you need to research or intend to discover or find out
* The material that you will use to discover and support your findings

The process of finding the answers to these things is referred to as invention.

First of All, What is Invention in Writing?

Granted, the word *invention* by definition evokes thoughts of new technology, history’s many great inventors and the latest and greatest gadgets and toys, but when speaking of invention in writing it is something entirely different.

Invention in writing, also commonly known as *brainstorming*, is the step in the writing process wherein a writer endeavors to unveil the ideas that they will base their written work around. In this stage, a writer will attempt to stave off some of the anxiety that they might be feeling about writing an academic paper, and attempt to ignite a certain amount of passion for the topic at hand. Invention typically happens at the beginning of the writing process and there are a number of strategies that a writer can use to aid them in this pursuit.

Types of Prewriting Strategies and Methods

Learning how to prewrite is not hard.

There are many types of prewriting exercises that a writer might choose to deploy. For the purpose of this article, we will discuss five of them in detail.

1. Freewriting
2. Looping
3. Talking to yourself
4. Listing
5. The use of charts and / or shapes

**Freewriting**

In this method, you will read over your assignment and take note of any topic, theme(s) or questions that you think of. Spend the next 15 minutes writing with these in mind, do not take your hands off the pen (or keyboard) during this time. Just allow the ideas to flow freely from your brain to the paper (or computer screen.) After you have finished, read over the draft you’ve just written and underline (or highlight) any concepts or ideas that might prove valuable to your thesis. You might choose to ask a friend or classmate to read over what you have written and provide feedback about the concept or topic.

**Looping**

After you’ve finished with your freewriting, you should read over everything that you had written down and highlight a key sentence or phrase that you feel is written particularly well. This sentence should be one that clearly and concisely expresses your ideas. Take the sentence and copy it at the top of a new page of paper to use as a guide when you freewrite again. Repeat this process a few times. Every time you write and continue to select new sentences or phrases, you will be able to better refine your concepts.

**Talking to yourself:**

Sometimes we find ourselves knowing what we want to say, but not actually knowing how to write it. If this is the situation you find yourself in, you might choose to start up a recording device of some sort (most cellphones have this option) and just talk. Dictate your ideas and listen to them later. As you replay the recording, write down any ideas that you feel should be incorporated into your paper. If you don’t have a cellphone or another recording device, you can always ask a friend to take notes while you speak.

**Listing**

In this scenario, you will list out every idea that you can think of (the ones that are linked to your idea, topic or subject). Reflect on any idea that you feel is worth listing, because when you prewrite your ideas before writing a final text, you are striving for quantity and no so much quality right now. List fast, and then set your list off to the side. A few minutes later, come back to your list and read through it and start the process again.

**The use of charts and / or graphs**

Focusing on specific keywords or phrases that encompass your topic, arrange them spatially in a gird, chart, table or other graph. Do the multiple spatial representations help your to better so correlation between your ideas? You don’t necessary need to think up a shape, just write the words on a piece of paper and use lines to connect them.

Understanding and Getting Used To Prewriting Process

As previously mentioned, the pre-writing process is the starting stage of a report and required for writing effectively.  This process includes everything that is done prior to a writer actually writing.

**This is the time when a writer might ask:**

* What am I going to write about?
* Why do I want to write about that?
* What kind of writing will I do?
* Who will my audience be?

**There are a number of reasons that someone might choose to write about something, they include:**

* To provide an explanation
* To instruct or inform about something
* To describe an event or occurrence
* To narrate, persuade, entertain

**The type of writing also varies. The options include, but are not limited to:**

* Short stories
* Poems
* Letters
* Narratives
* Essays
* Book or literary reviews
* Research reports
* Biographies

Short Explanation of Prewriting Techniques

After you’ve clearly answered the questions mentioned in the previous section, you should be able to begin the planning phase for your writing. Depending on the topic you have chosen (or have been assigned) it is possible to collect and compile ideas and thoughts by following the activities listed below

* Brainstorming or rapidly jotting down your thoughts
* Reading up on the topic, or researching it in depth
* Observing others
* Interviewing people in the field
* Discussing the topic with others
* Imagining certain situations
* Taking notes

From here, the final stage of prewriting requires that the writer methodically organizes their thoughts and all of their notes in a logical and reasonable manner. Some find it useful to draft an outline or to implement some sort of charting or graphing system to help them better organize the information that they have collected, and to group likeminded points together.

Once all of this has been completed, you will be ready to commence the next phase of the writing process – writing the actual first draft!

Example of Prewriting Techniques

If you are still struggling with prewriting, here are a few questions that might be helpful at generating ideas.

* How is my topic defined in the dictionary?
* What do I mean when I say\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?
* What other things can this mean?
* Is this topic similar to another topic?
* What is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_different or the same as?
* Why does this happen?
* What are the effects of\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?
* What have I previously learned about\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?
* What do I need to read further on\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?
* What would I like to know more about\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?
* Where can I go to find a subject matter expert on my topic?
* Is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_possible or not? Why is this?
* Has something significant ever happened because of\_\_\_\_\_\_?
* Is it reasonable to assume\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

You might find other ideas from research examples of prewriting online. Here are a few sources:

* [https://www2.ivcc.edu/rambo/eng1001/prewriting.htm (Links to an external site.)](https://www2.ivcc.edu/rambo/eng1001/prewriting.htm)
* [https://study.com/academy/lesson/effective-pre-writing-instructions-and-examples.html (Links to an external site.)](https://study.com/academy/lesson/effective-pre-writing-instructions-and-examples.html)
* [http://www.beaconlearningcenter.com/documents/1044\_01.pdf (Links to an external site.)](http://www.beaconlearningcenter.com/documents/1044_01.pdf)

Source:

The Research Project.  "Using Prewriting Strategies."  The Research Project,  2010-2011. <https://aresearchguide.com/prewriting-invention-strategies.html>