

Brainstorming Methods

Developing ideas before writing an essay can be overwhelming. Brainstorming allows you to express your mind in various ways.

Free Writing

This is simply writing down your thoughts as they come to you. The best way to free write is to use a timer. Set a desired time, say 10 minutes, and simply write whatever comes to your mind. Free writing can help break writer's block. After free writing, you may have many ideas from which to choose!

Word Association

Word association is a method to generate new ideas from a single word. Start with a word or two and write down the first word that comes to mind and continue to write another word associated with the one you've just written down. Word association can look like this for an essay prompt that asks you to write about social media:

Social Media – Instagram – videos – funny – friends -- connections

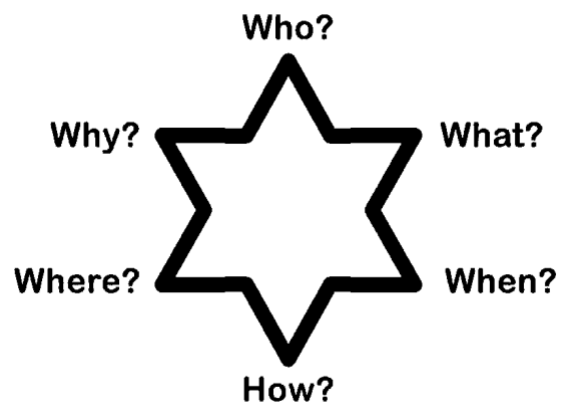
Lists or Bullets

By listing or adding bullet points as you brainstorm, you can organize your ideas better. Once you have several written down you can start grouping various thoughts into paragraphs or sections of your essay. For example, if you were listing or bulleting your ideas for the same essay prompt that asks you to write about social media, it may look something like this:

- *Instagram and other social media apps*
- *Benefit: Entertaining videos*
- *Benefit: Making and keeping connections with friends*
- *Downside: Bullying*

Star-Bursting

Star-bursting is a visual way of brainstorming ideas by asking five questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? As you answer these questions about your essay topic, you can begin to develop and analyze key ideas.



Mind Mapping

Mind Mapping helps break down your thought process by helping you visualize your main point and supporting ideas. By creating a mind map, you are beginning to organize your ideas.

