

Writing

ESSAYS

From Paragraph to Essay

3

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1 Pre-Writing: Getting Ready to Write

In this unit, you will learn how to ...

- choose and narrow a topic.
- gather ideas.
- edit ideas.

⇒ What is pre-writing?

Before you begin writing, you decide what you are going to write about. Then you plan what you are going to write. This process is called *pre-writing*.



Choosing and narrowing a topic

⇒ How to choose a topic for a paragraph

A paragraph is a group of five to ten sentences that give information about a topic. Before you write, you must choose a topic for your paragraph.

- Choose a topic that isn't too narrow (limited, brief). A narrow topic will not have enough ideas to write about. The ages of my brothers and sisters is too narrow. You can't write very much about it.
- Choose a topic that isn't too broad (general). A broad topic will have too many ideas for just one paragraph. Most paragraphs are five to ten sentences long. Schools is too general. There are thousands of things you could say about it.

A student could narrow this topic by choosing one aspect of schools to discuss.

schools → high schools in my country
popular school clubs
university entrance exams

1 Choose three topics from this list. Narrow each of the three down to a paragraph topic. Then compare with a partner.

- holidays
- friends
- my country
- exercise
- cars

Brainstorming

⇒ What is brainstorming?

Brainstorming is a way of gathering ideas about a topic. Think of a storm: thousands of drops of rain, all coming down together. Now, imagine thousands of ideas "raining" down onto your paper! When you brainstorm, write down every idea that comes to you. Don't worry now about whether the ideas are good or silly, useful or not. You can decide that later. Right now, you are gathering as many ideas as you can.

You will learn three types of brainstorming in this unit: *making a list*, *freewriting*, and *mapping*.

⇒ Making a list

Write single words, phrases, or sentences that are connected to your topic. Look at this list a student made when brainstorming ideas to write about her topic, "What should I study at university?"



history—learning about the past
math (too difficult, not interesting?)
What job do I want later?
English for work? Travel?
writing?
science—biology, chemistry
I don't like physics!
journalism
I like reading—literature?
art—drawing, painting, sculpture
photography?
studying / homework
friends / social life

2 Work with a partner or small group. Choose one of these topics. List as many ideas as you can in five minutes.

- teenage fashions
- social networking
- video games

3 Work alone. Choose a topic from exercise 1 on page 8, and list as many ideas as you can in five minutes.

➔ **Freewriting**

When you freewrite, you write whatever comes into your head about your topic, without stopping. Most freewriting exercises are short—just five or ten minutes.

Freewriting helps you practice *fluency* (writing quickly and easily). When you freewrite, you do not need to worry about *accuracy* (having correct grammar and spelling). Don't check your dictionary when you freewrite. Don't stop if you make a mistake. Just keep writing!

Here is an example of a student's freewriting:

There are too so many subjects to study at university, it is difficult to choose one for my major. I've always made good grades in math, but I don't like it very much. I don't like physical physics or any science very much. Writing—I've always liked writing. Would journalism be a good course to take? Newspapers have pictures, too, so maybe photography would be good. I'm maybe definitely looking forward to meeting new friends at university. And what about reading? Reading is a part of any course, but literature includes a lot of reading and it probably includes a lot of writing, too.

Notice how the writer's ideas jump around. When she makes a mistake, she just crosses it out and continues writing. One thought (*writing*) leads to another (*journalism*), and then to another (*photography*). There are some details that are not exactly about her topic (*looking forward to meeting new friends*), but that's OK in freewriting. You want to get as many ideas on paper as you can. You can take out unnecessary words and sentences later.

- 4** Choose one of the narrowed topics you thought of for exercise 1 on page 8. Practice freewriting for five minutes. Remember, do not stop, erase, or go back. Just write as much as you can.



➔ **Mapping**

To make a map, use a whole sheet of paper, and write your topic in the middle, with a circle around it. Then put the next idea in a circle above or below your topic, and connect the circles with lines. The lines show that the two ideas are related.

The example below shows a map of “What should I study at university?” The writer connected *favorite subjects* to the main idea. *Art* and *English* are connected to *favorite subjects* to show that they are related.



- 5** Choose another narrowed topic you thought of for exercise 1 on page 8. Make a map in five minutes. Share your map with a partner. Explain how the circles are related to each other.

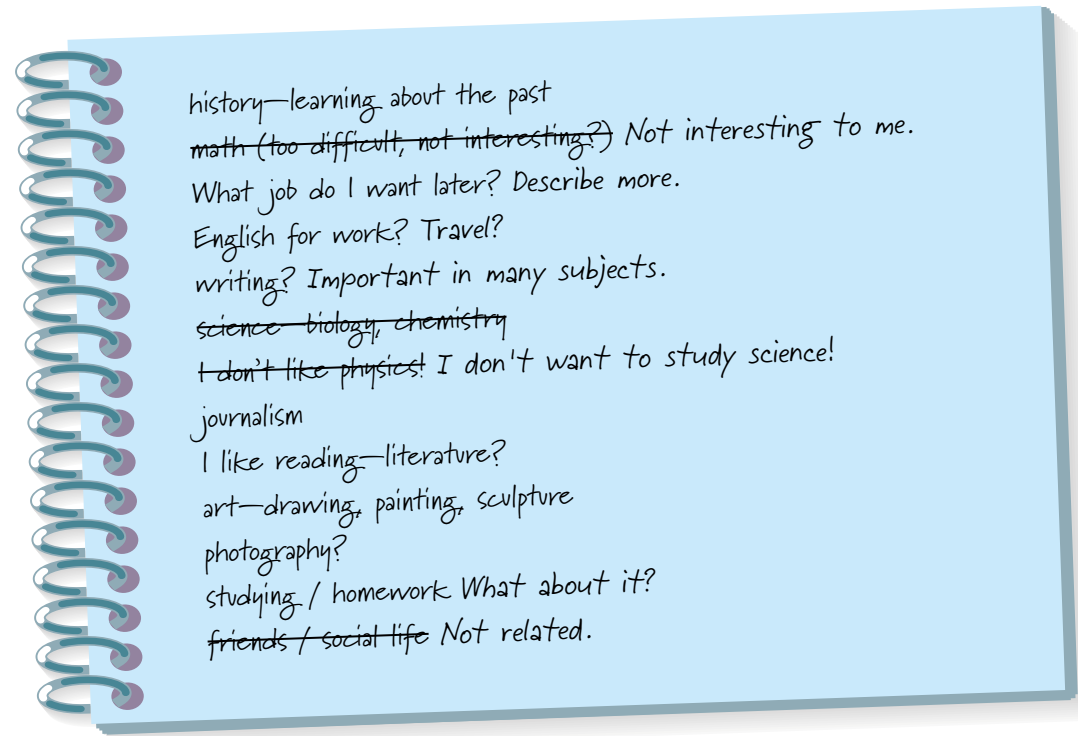
➔ **What's the best way to brainstorm?**

There is no best method of brainstorming. Some writers like to use lists because they don't have to write complete sentences. Some writers like freewriting because they can write quickly and ideas come easily. Some writers prefer mapping because they can easily see the relationship between ideas. Experiment with all three methods, and then choose the one that works best for you.

Editing

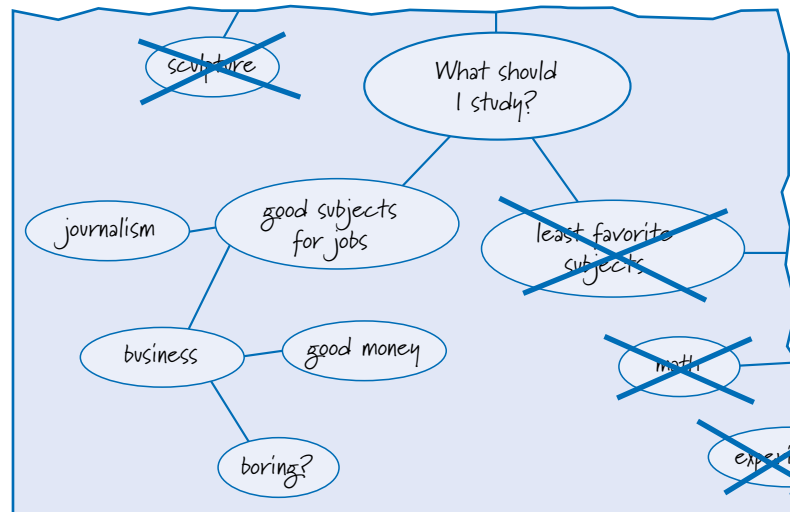
➔ How to edit

After you have gathered plenty of ideas, you will need to go back and edit them. This is the time to choose which ideas are the most interesting, and which are the most *relevant to* (important or necessary for) your topic. Of course, you can still add new ideas if you think of something else while you are re-reading your list. For example, the student writing “What should I study at university?” edited her list like this:



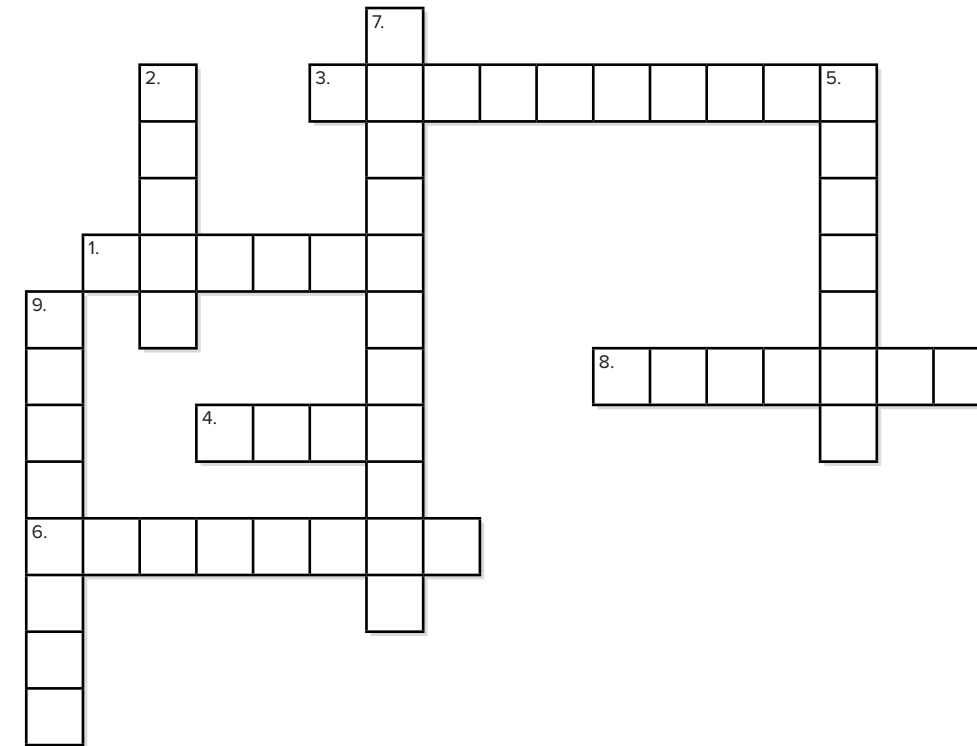
To edit freewriting, cross out sentences or parts of sentences that aren't related. You can add more ideas in the margin or add more sentences at the bottom.

To edit a map, cross out circles that don't belong, and add new ones if you get more ideas. You might also change the lines you have drawn.



Put it together

A Complete the crossword puzzle.



Each paragraph has only one topic. If the topic is too ¹ n___, you will not be able to write enough about it. On the other hand, if the topic is too ² b___, you will have too many ideas for just one paragraph.

After you choose a topic, you will need to ³ b___ some ideas to write about in your paragraph. One way to do this is to make a ⁴ l___. Another way of brainstorming is ⁵ m___. After you have written down many ideas, you can go back and decide which ones are the most interesting and the most ⁶ r___ to your topic.

⁷ F___ is a useful way to help you write more easily and naturally. In this kind of writing, you are working on ⁸ f___, and not ⁹ a___.

B Look again at the note about brainstorming at the top of page 9. Brainstorm a list of pros (good things) and cons (bad things) about each of the three methods of brainstorming.

6 Look at the list you made in exercise 3 on page 9, the freewriting you did in exercise 4 on page 10, or the map you made in exercise 5 on page 11. Edit your brainstorming. Show your work to a partner. Explain how you edited your brainstorming.