

## Pre-writing Strategies (Exploratory Writing / Invention)

GRS Writing Group – WED 8 FEB

"The scariest moment is always just before you start [writing]. After that, things can only get better"

[Stephen King](#) (American author, 60 novels, 200 short stories, >350 million copies)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen\\_King](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_King)



How do you start writing a piece of academic text?

What do you aim to achieve the first time you write about a topic?

The first draft of a piece of academic writing can be very difficult to start. A first draft should be:

- Private – turn off your internal critic and focus on getting your ideas on the page – you do not need for correct spelling, grammar, sentences
- Work in progress – early writing is also about thinking, developing understanding and refining a message – not writing down what you already know.
- Started early – rarely can writers shape perfect text without exploring the topic on paper
- Written easily - use a technique to get your thoughts on the page quickly and easily –possibly using symbols or abbreviations, scribbling all over the page, in another language...
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Read more about the exploratory nature of early drafts and the discomfort this can cause [<https://explorationsofstyle.com/2013/09/26/the-discomforts-of-uncertainty/> ] or read more about the pre-writing in a first language

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2000.tb00623.x/abstract>

Technique	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Free writing <a href="http://grammar.about.com/od/yourwriting/a/freewrite.htm?terms=freewriting">http://grammar.about.com/od/yourwriting/a/freewrite.htm?terms=freewriting</a>	Write without stopping for set period without any editing of written text while writing.	Quick text generation, warmup for more structured writing	Too much like writing, cramp
Brainstorming or Listing <a href="http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/brainstorming/">http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/brainstorming/</a>	'Brain dump' ideas & related ideas on page – possibly in order	Easy brain dump, not as strongly linked to language as free writing	May be either too messy or too structured

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Mind mapping <a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/using-mind-maps-develop-writing">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/using-mind-maps-develop-writing</a>	Brain dump ideas on page and explore connections between ideas by group, order	Explores relationships between ideas, good for visual learners	Time-consuming



Pen and paper (and scissors and highlighter pens) may be the simplest tools for prewriting. If you prefer to pre-write online you may consider these online tools:

Free write by turning down the font size to where you cannot read the text or turn your font to white / light gray or Freewrite using the Write or Die App or Pomodoro Timer

<http://writeordie.com/>

<https://www.tomatoid.com/>

Brainstorm using the Google App Connected Mind

<https://connected-mind.appspot.com/>

Mindmap using the free subscription options in Bubbl.us and more

<https://bubbl.us/>

<https://www.thepensters.com/blog/academic-writing-tools/>



If you have some spare time have a quick look at:

Overcoming Writer's Block for some inspiring quotes

<http://grammar.about.com/od/yourwriting/a/wblockquotes.htm>

The Power of Shutting Down Your Senses for thinking about sensory deprivation, float tanks and boosting creativity

<https://blog.bufferapp.com/the-power-of-shutting-down-your-senses-how-to-boost-your-creativity-and-have-a-clear-mind>

Further details of the UWA GRS Writing Group are available here, including advice sheets to download:

<http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup>