Prewriting

Before actually working on a paper, many writers find it helpful to first brainstorm ideas and put them into an organized outline.

Brainstorming

With brainstorming, anything goes! Just grab a pen and write down whatever comes to mind in relation to your topic. Some ideas for brainstorming are the following:

1. Make a list
2. Use diagrams to connect topics to each other
3. Free write (write without fixing or editing)
4. Talk to other writers for inspiration

The most important part of brainstorming is to write down as many ideas as you can. Whatever strategy works best for you is the one you should use.

Outlining

Once you have several ideas for your writing, it is important to organize them into a logical format. Keep in mind that most academic essays have an introduction, at least three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Each paragraph should have 1-3 main points, with several supporting sub-points.

Introduction
Tell your audience what you intend to inform them of in the essay.

Body
Includes the main points of your essay in a logical progression.

Conclusion
Summarizes the essay as a whole, and leaves the audience

Some people use Roman numerals to outline, others use dashes and dots. However, the point of having an outline is that you have a guide to follow to make sure your essay is organized. As long as the audience can understand your thought process, whatever strategy works best for you is the one you should use.

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