

BRAINSTORMING

The Writing Centre, Teaching and Learning Services, U of T Scarborough

This handout is available in an alternative format on request

BRAINSTORMING is the term used for a number of activities and exercises designed to freely engage your mind’s creativity and encourage the process of writing. This is a preliminary stage of the writing process which can help you generate the maximum number of ideas.

Remember: In brainstorming, **MORE IS BETTER!** Try to come up with as many ideas as possible. Do not edit, censor or evaluate your ideas at this stage.

Experiment with the methods listed here until you find the one(s) most suitable for your assignment or the type of learner you are. Different methods will suit different people at different times.

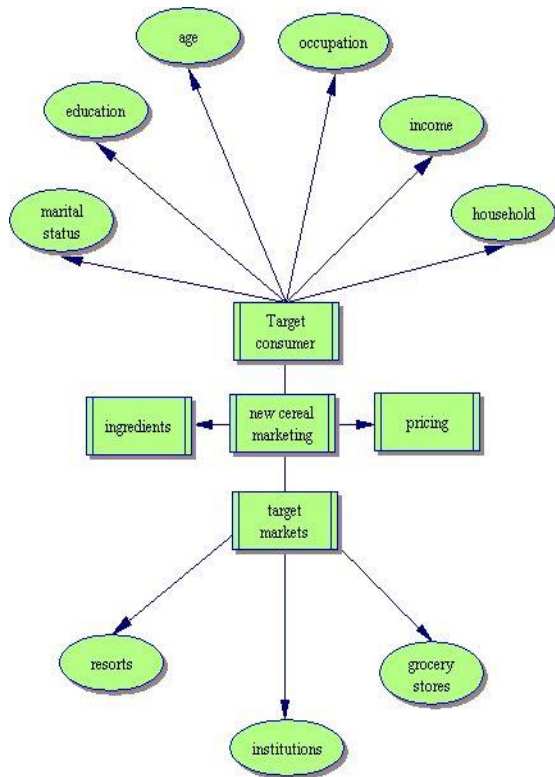
Method	When useful	Process
Freewriting	For generating ideas in all disciplines and for all kinds of projects	Write for a set period of time or a set number of pages, without stopping until you reach your goal. (See example #3 below)
Listing	For non traditional essay writing such as Business projects.	List any words or concepts that come up in any order in which they show up in your mind.
Mind maps and Clustering	For a visual picture of a particular problem, concept or project, and also for showing the progression of ideas in scientific work	Make a map or web from key concepts or ideas. (See example #1 below)
Five “W’s” and “H”	For generating questions across the disciplines, including in the physical sciences, examining data and in preparation for writing reports	Ask the questions: who, what, where, when, why and how. This could generate useful information in a number of disciplines. For ideas in marketing, (See example #2 below).
Letter Writing	For unpacking complex concepts or theoretical ideas in a relaxed context.	Write out concepts in a simple and personal manner, just allowing your ideas to flow as if to a good friend or confidant.

-EXAMPLES-

Example #1

Mind Map and Clustering for marketing assignment:

Marketing a new cereal:



Example #2

Five W's and H:
Journalistic questions

Who – is the intended customer for my product?
What – is unique about the product?
When – in the year would I sell the most products?
Why – would this particular demographic buy my product?
Where – is the best venue for selling this product?
How – could I get the product from production to consumer in the most cost effective manner?

Example #3

Freewriting

This marketing assignment is so interesting and there is just so much to think about. What do I want to market? Sometimes I really like having sweet stuff for breakfast, but I don't want to get fat and if I have a healthy breakfast, I won't need to eat a big lunch. Fruits, nuts, whole grains are great, but they can be so boring. How could I make this a yummy cereal to eat? I'll have to experiment with recipes. Who would eat this? Not just uptight parents! Wouldn't it be great to have something that's good for you and that tastes great? I would have to have a great package also, with beautiful colours with pictures from nature. Maybe a funky looking mom or something on the box, something that would look really great next to all the other boxes at the supermarket.

Additional clusters could be added in the blank space of your paper until you come up with a number of clusters resembling a web, which could then be used to make connections to your central concepts or idea. Coloured pencils or markers could be used as additional tools to help you in recognizing connections or patterns, or for distinguishing between different categories of ideas.

(Diagram prepared using Inspiration software: available for use in AC221)

Some sources: Peter Elbow: *Writing with Power*

Diana Hacker: *A Writer's Reference*

© Evelyn Marrast, *The Writing Centre, University of Toronto at Scarborough.*

Handout also available at <http://ctl.utoronto.ca/twc/webresources>.