The Writing Process
Prewriting, Planning, and Drafting

Prewriting

Prewriting occurs before any writing actually does. When you prewrite, you are simply trying to understand the assignment, brainstorming ideas, collecting notes and doing preliminary research, and starting to think about a thesis. Do not hesitate to visit the Writing Center during the prewriting stage to bounce ideas off of the tutors there. To help you start this process, here are some techniques for brainstorming:

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<th>Talk Out loud</th>
<th>Annotate</th>
<th>List</th>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Freewrite</th>
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<td>Just tell your ideas to someone conversationally. Oftentimes when you do this, your ideas become clearer to you, and sometimes, you find out how you want to word phrases in your paper.</td>
<td>As you are doing preliminary research, annotate your articles. This will help you put together ideas, find quotes that will be applicable to your paper, and generate questions that you can further expand upon in your paper. To annotate, circle, underline, or highlight phrases that interest you or that you do not understand. You can also write notes or questions in the margins or highlight quotations that can be used as evidence. (See Annotation handout for more information.)</td>
<td>Listing involves just writing down any thought or idea that comes to you. This brainstorming technique does not require much organization; simply list one idea after the other. Later, items on this list can be grouped, categorized, or deleted as your topic becomes narrower.</td>
<td>Clustering is a visual technique used to organize your ideas. Here, start with a large center bubble, and expand outwards based upon relationships between subjects. This will often help you find where to place certain paragraphs in your paper, as well as help you identify information that should be included in those paragraphs.</td>
<td>Freewriting is just writing for a certain amount of time without stopping or hesitating. This lets your ideas flow without blocking them. If you choose to use this technique, do not worry about spelling, grammar, or meaning; just write. Sometimes this technique may seem useless, but often, you will write a sentence you would like to use, write a word that will portray the perfect meaning you would like to say, or prompt questions that could help you organize ideas later.</td>
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For more tips on narrowing your ideas, ask yourself these questions or see the Bedford Handbook pp. 5.

1. Is my topic relevant to my audience?
2. Do I know enough about the topic to write the paper? Can I find adequate research if I do not?
3. Does my topic fit the prompt?
4. Can I make a clear thesis and provide relevant arguments regarding my topic?
Planning

Planning is taking what you have brainstormed and beginning to organize it. At this stage, you should also review the assignment, gather further evidence, and clarify your thesis. Oftentimes, people plan their paper by creating outlines. Here are steps to writing a basic outline (Bedford Handbook pp. 24-5):

1. Put the thesis at the top.
2. Use sentences unless phrases are clear.
3. Use the conventional system of numbers, letters, and indents.
4. Always use at least two subdivisions for a category, since nothing can be divided into fewer than two parts.
5. Limit the number of major sections in the outline; if the list of roman numerals (at the first level) gets too long, try clustering the items into fewer categories with more subcategories.
6. Be flexible; be prepared to change your outlines as your drafts evolve.
7. Finish your outline with a concluding statement, possible a rewording of your thesis for a clear wrap-up.

Below, you can see an example outline:

I. This would be your introduction or thesis statement.
II. This would be your first body paragraph.
   A. Here, you would list supporting evidence.
   B. This would be another piece of evidence.
      i. Here, you could put a quote you would like to include.
      ii. You would write what you want to say about the quote here.
III. Another topic sentence for a different body paragraph would go here.
   A. Put more supporting evidence here.
   B. Put more supporting evidence here.
   C. If you have more supporting evidence, you would write about it here.
IV. This point is another place where you would place a topic sentence.
   A. Supporting evidence you want to use is placed here.
   B. Additional supporting evidence can be placed here.
V. Conclusion

After you have organized all of your thoughts, bringing your outline to the Writing Center and working with a tutor can enable you in further drafting your essay.

Drafting

Drafting involves the actual writing of your paper. During this stage, you will expand upon categories in your outline, putting your thoughts into sentences and paragraphs. Do not necessarily worry about spelling or grammar, just focus on expanding your ideas and clarifying your thesis and assertions. Visit the Writing Center for additional help!