

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
 maths (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
- things to do at the beach
- driving a motorbike

3 Work alone. Choose a topic from exercise 1 on page 5, and list as many ideas as you can in five minutes.

6 PRE-WRITING: GETTING READY TO WRITE

Freewriting

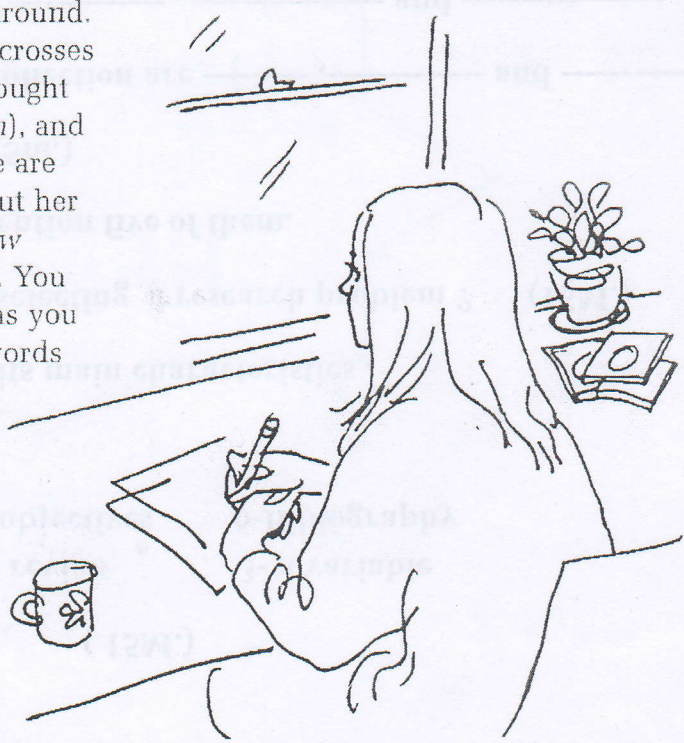
When you freewrite, you write whatever comes into your head about your topic, without stopping. Most freewriting exercises are short—just five or ten minutes.

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. I've always had good marks in maths, 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.

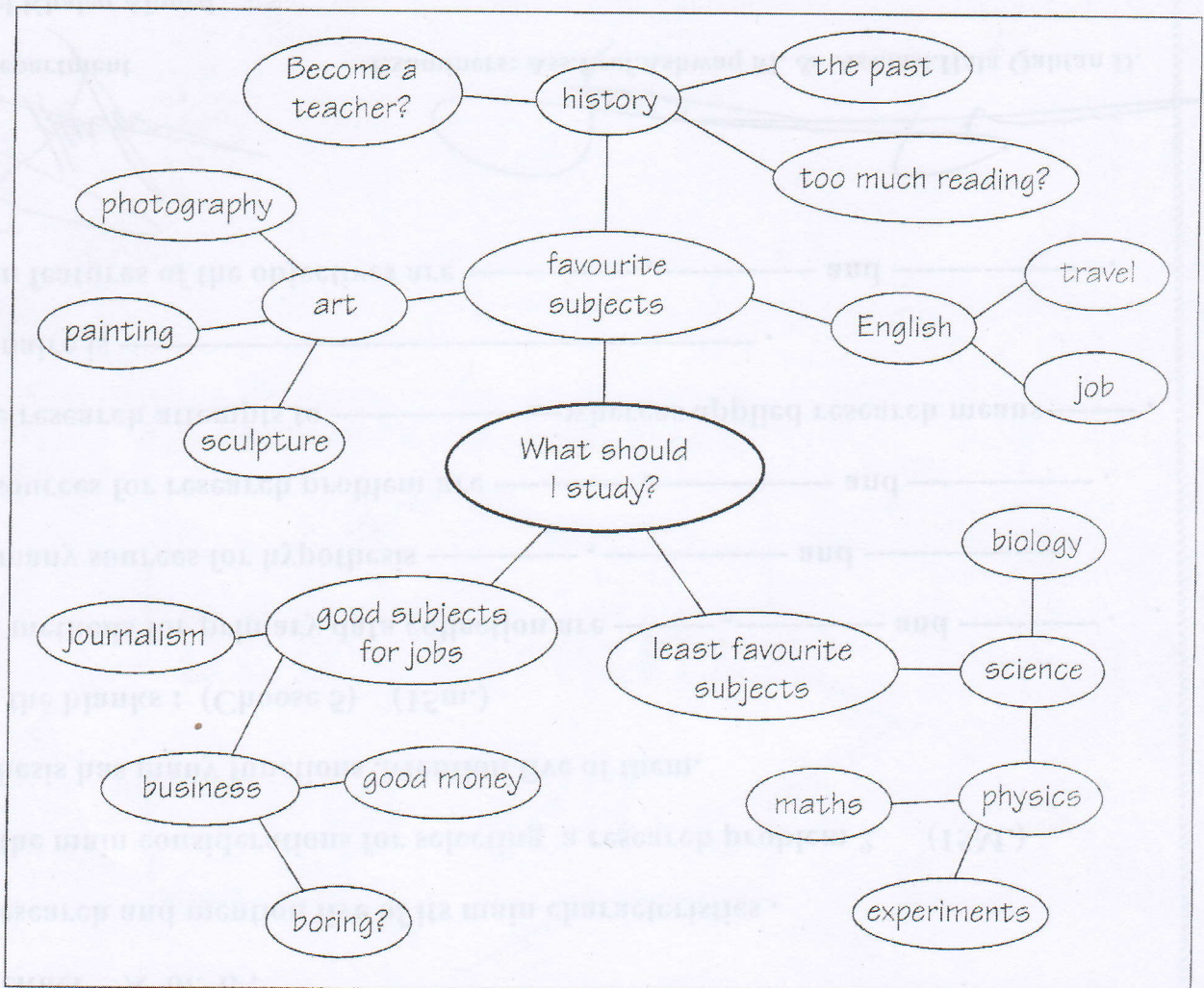


- 4 Choose one of the narrowed down topics you thought of for exercise 1 on page 5. Practise freewriting for five minutes. Remember, do not stop, erase, or go back. Just write as much as you can.

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 *favourite subjects* to the main idea. *Art* and *English* are connected to *favourite subjects* to show that they are related.



- 5 Choose another narrowed down topic you thought of for exercise 1 on page 5. 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.

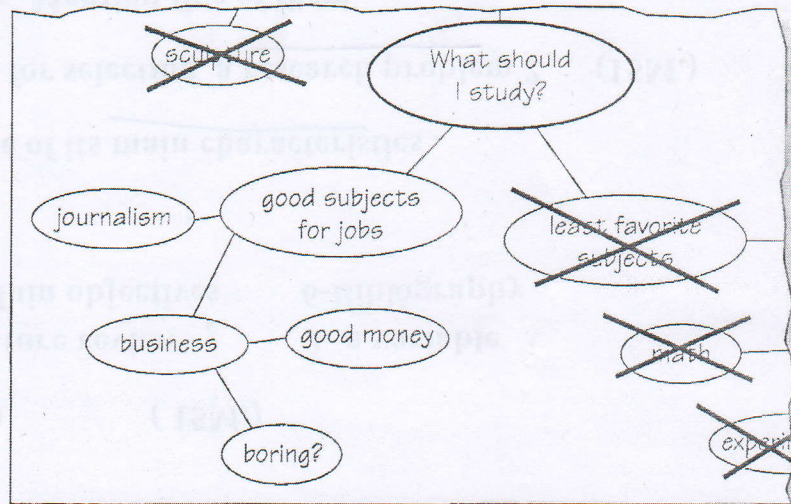
Editing

➤ 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 in college?' edited her list like this:

history—learning about the past
~~maths (too difficult, not interesting?)~~ *Not interesting to me.*
 What job do I want later? *Describe more.*
 English for work? Travel?
 writing? *Important in many subjects.*
~~science—biology, chemistry~~
~~I don't like physics!~~ *I don't want to study science!*
 journalism
 I like reading—literature?
 art—drawing, painting, sculpture
 photography?
 studying / homework *What about it?*
~~friends / social life~~ *Not related.*

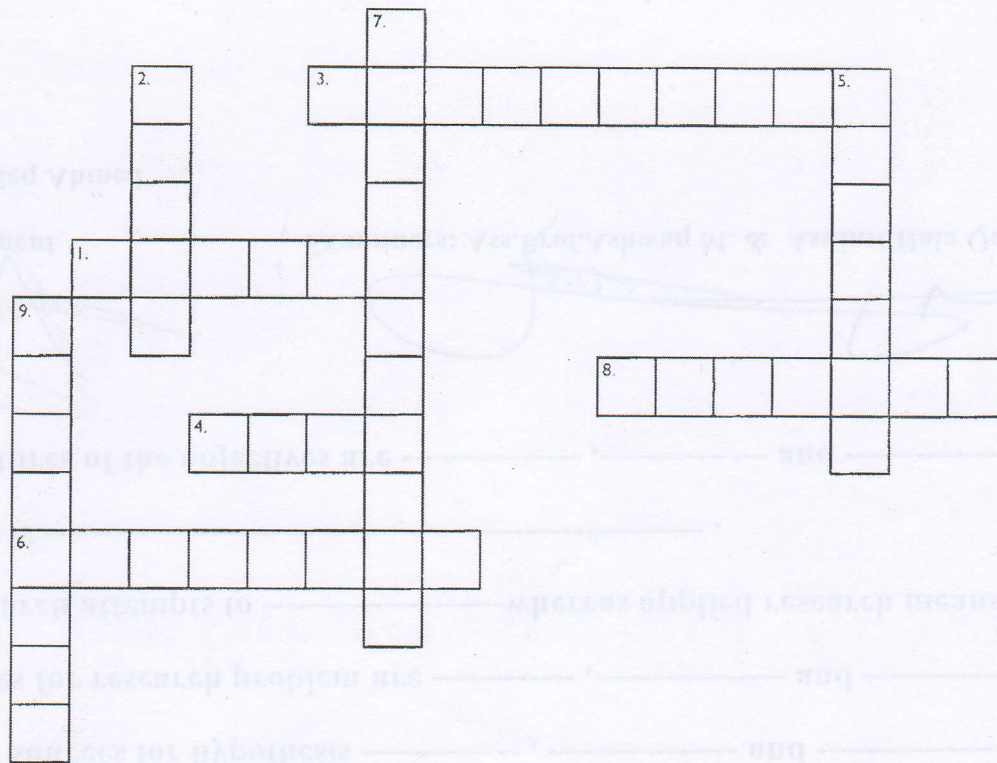
To edit freewriting, cross out sentences or parts of sentences that aren't related. You can add more ideas in the margin or add more sentences at the bottom. To edit a map, cross out circles that don't belong, and add new ones if you get more ideas. You might also change the lines you have drawn.



- 6 Look at the list you made in exercise 3 on page 6, the freewriting you did in exercise 4 on page 7, or the map you made in exercise 5 on page 8. Edit your brainstorming. Show your work to a partner. Explain how you edited your brainstorming.

Review

7 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 __.

- 8** Look again at the note about brainstorming at the bottom of page 8. Brainstorm a list of pros (good things) and cons (bad things) about each of the three methods of brainstorming.