Prewriting

Prewriting is an important part of any project. It allows the writer to collect their thoughts and help with organization. The more prewriting a writer does, the easier it can be to produce an exemplary piece of writing. Many authors have different skills and preferences when it comes to prewriting, and it may take a while for you to figure out your own style.

Creating/Situating a Writing Space

Do you have a favorite chair that you write in? Can you only get work done in a coffee shop or can you do it at home? Do you have a playlist that you have to listen to? There are many more factors to consider but they all contribute to your writing space. By establishing and understanding where your space is, it can limit distractions and promote better and stronger writing. Take a second and really think about what makes you comfortable while you write and try to always incorporate those into your writing process.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is usually the first step that many writers take. As a first step, it becomes the initial stage for the project and there is no wrong way of brainstorming; anything goes! Listed down below are a few tips and tools to help get the process started.

1. **Write while reading:** Say that you already have a subject in mind, and you found some scholarly sources; great! However, you have no idea what the project is actually going to be, so you start reading to get the brain working. When you read a line that makes you think, or better yet, jogs your brain into asking a question, write that down. A lot of strong thesis statements and papers spawn from a simple question.
2. **Free write:** Turn off the inner editor and just write. This is a good tool for prewriting, as it lets the mind wander and explore different ideas and viewpoints. Do your best to record your thoughts, not to edit them (that comes later).
3. **Mind map:** A mind map is a simple tool in the writer's arsenal. Like free writing, the reader can explore different areas that they have in mind and see if there is enough information available to fulfill the needs of the project. To create your map, start by writing down a central idea and then branch off of it.

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. Your outline, whatever form it takes, will be the "map" you follow while writing your paper. Keep in mind that most academic essays have an introduction, at least three main points, and a conclusion. Keep the outline simple and do not be afraid to deviate from the outline if it makes sense for the paper.

Below is an example of an outline.

1. **Introduction:** Tell your audience what the essay is going to be about. In outlining, this is a good place to brainstorm key concepts and summaries that the reader is going to need to know before the essay can really kick off. Include the thesis statement in this section.

a. **Thesis Statement:** It is recommended to write your thesis statement in the outline, because it can be easier to change/tweak here, instead of in the final paper, and can be a good guideline for main points.
2. **Body:** Include the main points of your essay in a logical progression. Each point should be labeled with a topic sentence/idea that covers what each point/paragraph is going to be about, which helps with organization.
    a. **Main Point 1:**
        i. Subpoint 1:
        ii. Subpoint 2:
    b. **Main Point 2:**
        i. Subpoint 1:
        ii. Subpoint 2:
    c. **Main Point 3:**
        i. Subpoint 1:
        ii. Subpoint 2:
3. **Conclusion:** A strong conclusion summarizes the essay as a whole and pushes the conversation forward. If a writer achieves this, then the audience is left wanting to further their own understanding of the subject and wants to contribute more as well.

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 project is organized. Remember, everyone's pre-writing style is different! Explore your own so you can be the best writer that you can be!

Need more information or assistance?

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