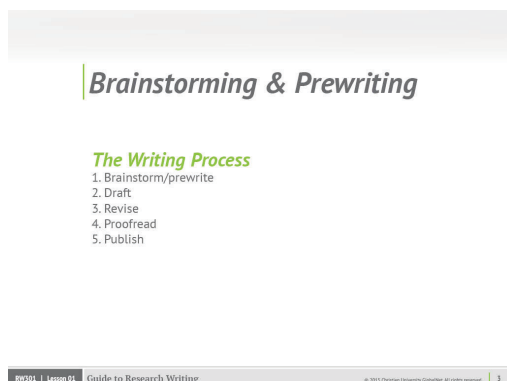
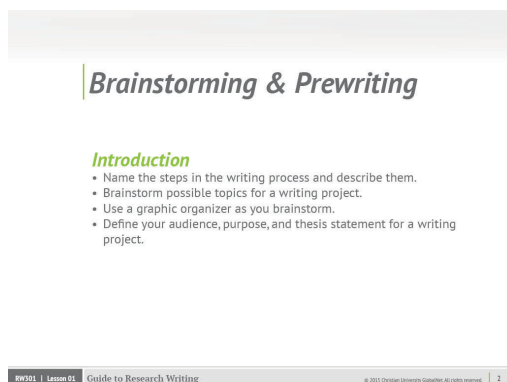




Linda Triemstra Cook
Linda Triemstra Cook is the author
and instructor of this course.



Introduction

Welcome to this course, Guide to Research Writing, which is intended to give you tools to use as you complete writing projects in your other courses. In these five lessons, we'll talk about the writing process, how to research topics, how to find and use sources, how to cite those sources properly, ethical issues in writing, and how to bring all of these elements together in a piece of writing. Throughout the lessons, you'll have opportunities to practice the skills covered in this course. For each lesson, goals are specified and resources (a bibliography, links to web-sites, or both) are provided. The required text for this course is the seventh edition of Turabian's Manual for Writers.

In this first lesson, you'll hear about the writing process and, more specifically, brainstorming and prewriting. By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Name the steps in the writing process and describe them.
- Brainstorm possible topics for a writing project.
- Use a graphic organizer as you brainstorm.
- Define your audience, purpose, and thesis statement for a writing project.

Experts who have studied how people learn to write have identified five steps in that process (see figure 1.1).

The first step, brainstorming or prewriting, is one in which a writer thinks about possible topics, makes preliminary notes about his or her knowledge of a topic, asks questions, and thinks about possible sources to use in writing about that topic.

Drafting, the second step in the writing process, is narrowly defined as the writing itself, whether that is an essay, a book review, a research paper, or another assignment. For the purposes

of this course, the description of drafting will be broadened to include the process of researching, as well as writing a first draft of a paper. The emphasis will be on finding and using sources.

The third step in the writing process is revision. As you read, research, and write, you will make changes to your work. (It's a truism in writing and editing that there is no such thing as a single draft of any piece of writing.) As you find new sources, or think further about the sources you've already used, you may decide to add information to your research paper or delete a section from it. Or you may change your view of a topic. This process is part of your learning, and it is why writing is such an effective way of learning.

Proofreading, the fourth step in the writing process, involves re-reading your work to be sure that basic elements, such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar, are correct. Although proofreading seems to be straightforward, even simple, it is a skill in itself. Be aware also that using spell check does not substitute for proofreading by an alert human being. Careful proofreading enhances your writing.

The final step in the writing process, publishing, is broadly defined as almost any way in which writing is shared. Therefore, reading an essay to classmates or submitting a paper to one's instructor would be considered publishing your writing.

Now, let's look more closely at brainstorming. Brainstorming, which may include the use of graphic organizers, helps you to think freely and creatively about possible writing topics.

In some courses, writing topics will be assigned to you. Perhaps your instructor requires you to write a 10-page paper with these expectations: Choose one book from a list, read that book, summarize the author's thought and main points, comment on those points in light of the reading done for the course (five pages), and analyze the author's conclusions, giving a basis for your agreement or disagreement (five pages).

Your starting point for this assignment is what your instructor wants you to know and do:

- Read a book so that you learn new facts or gain new perspectives or both.
- Summarize the book's content (facts or perspectives), which requires you to use skills such as comparing and contrasting (you think and organize).

Brainstorming & Prewriting

Sample Assignment #1

- Learn new facts or gain new perspectives or both
- Think and organize
- Recall facts or perspectives and categorize them (again, you think and organize)
- Analyze
- Formulate an argument

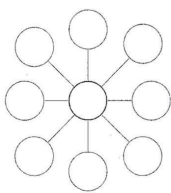
Brainstorming & Prewriting

Sample Assignment #2

- What subtopics am I curious about? most interested in? passionate about?
- What questions do I have from reading, lectures, or group discussions?
- What do I already know?
- What do I want to know?

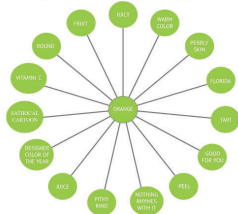
Brainstorming & Prewriting

Clustering



Brainstorming & Prewriting

Graphic Organizer: Clustering



- Consider other readings, which means you recall facts or perspectives and categorize them (again, you think and organize).
- Draw and defend your own conclusions (you analyze, which is a form of higher-level thinking; you put information in context and formulate an argument).

However, your next assignment is to write about a more specialized segment of information from the book that you read. As you consider your choices, you'll ask yourself these kinds of questions:

- What subtopics am I curious about? most interested in? passionate about?
- What questions do I have from reading, lectures, or group discussions?
- What do I already know?
- What do I want to know?

Answering these questions will help you to choose a topic.

If you feel lost or stuck, you may want to use a graphic organizer. A graphic organizer, usually a diagram, is a visual (graphic) tool that can be used throughout the writing process. One use of a graphic organizer is to help you to brainstorm words or ideas. A simple graphic organizer (see figure 1.2) is used in clustering, and this is how it works:

In brainstorming, there are no wrong answers. Think of the word orange. What comes to mind? Some possible responses (see figure 1.3) are fruit, warm color, pebbly skin, juicy, Florida, tart, good for you, vitamin C, round, designer color of the year, juice, peel, pithy rind, nothing rhymes with it, a cartoon titled "Rhymes with Orange" As you see, these responses range from general ("fruit") to specific ("pebbly skin," "pithy rind"). The responses also describe three major categories: a fruit, including its physical and nutritional characteristics; a color; and word play ("nothing rhymes with it"). From the wordplay comes the title of a cartoon, "Rhymes with Orange." This cartoon strip has a wry viewpoint about the quirks of everyday life. Unlike many cartoons, there's rarely an ongoing story line, and so it is like "orange": nothing rhymes with it.

As you followed this description, you'll have heard the phrase "three major categories." That phrase highlights another func-

Brainstorming & Prewriting

Considerations for Choosing a Topic

- Audience
- Purpose
- Thesis Statement

tion of this visual, or graphic, tool: It is also an organizer. Seeing the responses to the word orange helps you to classify them.

Working from those categories, you might choose to write a brief, factual piece about the nutritional value of oranges. But it would be equally possible to write about current trends in design and the popularity of orange as a color. Or you might want to find out more about “Rhymes with Orange.” Remember, brainstorming helps you to think freely and creatively about possible writing topics.

When you choose a writing topic, you want to consider three fundamentals: audience, purpose, and a thesis statement.

Every piece of writing has an audience and a purpose. For example, you may email a friend to say, “Let’s meet for coffee.” For this piece of writing, your audience is one person, your friend; your implicit purpose for writing is to set a time to meet for coffee. Your larger purpose is to connect with your friend.

In this email, there is no explicit thesis statement, which is the third fundamental. A thesis statement encapsulates what you intend to write about (sometimes referred to as what you intend to prove).

Let’s imagine that you and your friend had a long, exhilarating conversation over coffee. As you recall the conversation, and the sense of camaraderie, you think, “Connecting with friends is important for a person’s well-being.” That thought stays with you, and you begin to wonder: Has anyone studied the effect of friendship on a person’s well-being? Maybe social psychologists have researched this. What does the Bible say about friendship or community? What insights come from works on pastoral care?

You decide that you’d like to research this topic, and your thesis statement, born from your reflections and questions, is, “Connecting with friends is important for a person’s well-being.” This sentence says plainly what you want to study and prove.

Effective writing demands that you define an audience and purpose. Effective writing also depends on formulating a clear thesis statement. Cultivating the ability to define these fundamentals will give you clarity as you move toward the next step in the writing process, which is drafting.

In this lesson, you learned about the steps in the writing process, used a graphic organizer to brainstorm a word, and saw

Brainstorming & Prewriting

Putting it into Practice

Review the goals for this session. Have you met them? If you are unclear about any material, review the audio of or the graphics for this session.

Using a graphic organizer, brainstorm a word.

Brainstorm a concept or topic.

Define the fundamentals for that topic.

how brainstorming can suggest topics for a writing project. You also were introduced to three fundamentals of writing: audience, purpose, and thesis statement.

In the next lesson, you'll learn about drafting, which is the second step in the writing process. That lesson will focus on sources and research.

Assignments

- Review the goals for this lesson. Have you met them? If you are unclear about any material, review the audio of or the graphics for this lesson.
- Using a graphic organizer, brainstorm a word.
- Brainstorm a concept or topic.
- Define the fundamentals for that topic.