

# Write Now!

## Do you ever feel like the hardest part of writing a paper is getting started?



It happens to everyone, so the Writing Center has put together some techniques to get you started. Try some of these tips and see which ones work for you!

### Getting Ready

The first way to get started is to prepare.

- Find a quiet place (this might mean leaving your dorm for the library)
- Keep the assignment handy
- Gather reference materials
- Grab a pen and paper or a keyboard and mouse!

### Freewriting –Looping

- Freewriting is not supposed to be final. It is a way to get your ideas down on paper without trying to organize them in any way. If you do not like what you write, you can throw it out!
- Relax, clear your mind, and forget about any writing conventions.
- Set a time limit from 5 to 20 minutes (depending upon your writing experience).
- Now WRITE! Do not stop for the whole time. Do not go back to edit anything. Just keep writing. If you cannot think of anything to write, write that! *I cannot think of anything to write. I cannot think of anything to write.* Eventually an idea will come to you.
- When the time is over, stop writing. Read through the page or wait until later. As you read, underline phrases, words, or sentences that pertain to the topic you are working on.
- Pick the most useful points and explain them thoroughly. If you get stuck, freewrite again.
- Hopefully this will get you started.

**Looping** is similar to freewriting, but with a few twists.

- After freewriting for the first 5-10 minute period (your first loop), stop.
- Read what you wrote and write a single sentence to summarize the most important idea.
- Starting with this sentence, write for another 5-10 minutes.
- Continue this process until you have something to start your paper.

### Multiple Perspectives

Sometimes considering all angles of your topic can help you to realize interesting issues that may be worth pursuing for your assignment. Consider the following aspects:

1. **Description:** What is your topic? Why is it interesting? What is confusing or controversial about it? What are some of the subtopics related to your topic?
2. **History:** What are the origins of your topic? How has the nature of your topic changed throughout time? How have certain events affected your topic?

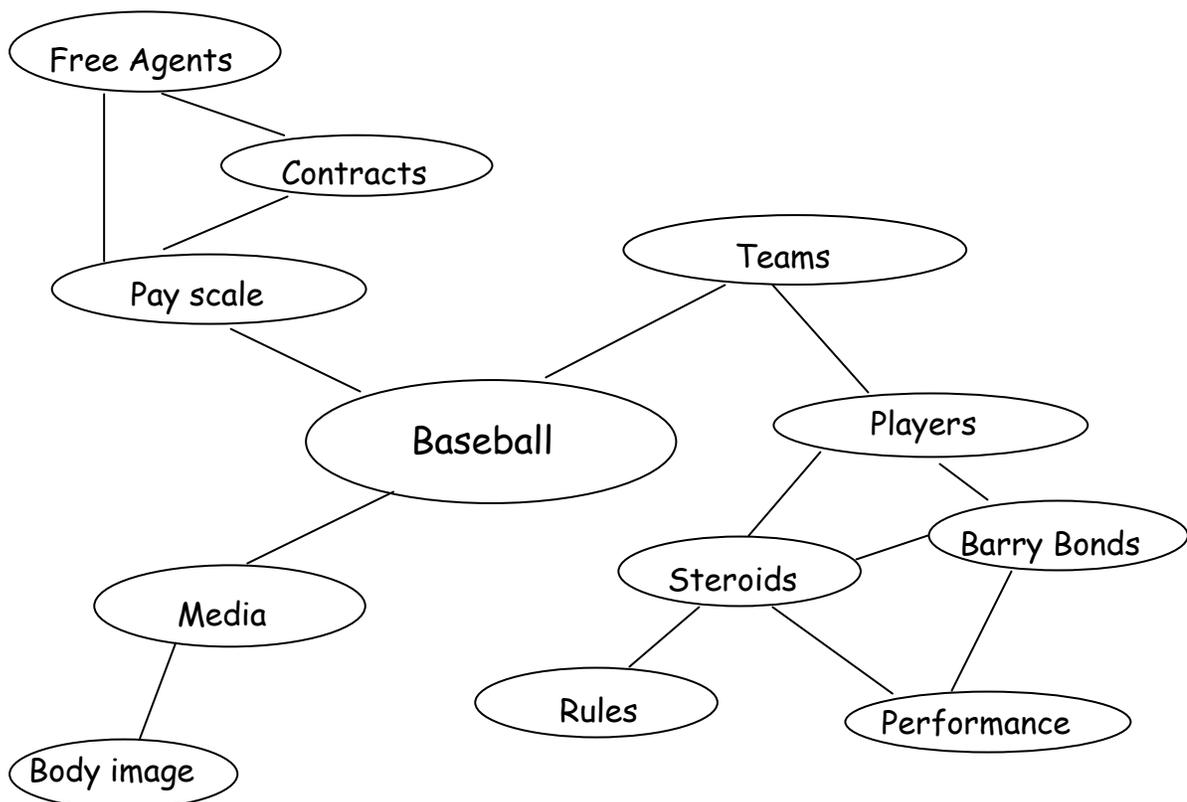
3. **Expansion:** What other topics/issues is your topic connected to? What is it influenced by and how? What does it influence and how? Who is invested in your topic? Why? What do those who are invested in your topic have to say about it? What do you have to say about your topic?

## Ask Questions

Start with the basic Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Ask as many questions as you can about your topic. Then start answering the questions.

## Mapping/Clustering

- Mapping and clustering give you visual ideas and connections to your topic.
- Begin by writing your main topic in the middle of the paper and circling it.
- Write any subtopics or ideas relating to your topic near the topic circle, circle those, and connect them to your main topic.
- You can then write more ideas that may come to mind from your new subtopics and connect them to the circles you already have.
- When you are finished, you will end up with a number of smaller circles generated from both your topic circle and your subtopics or other ideas.
- Some of your ideas may link to the main topic circle and to other ideas as well.
- Each cluster of circles will help clarify how your ideas relate to one another.



## Listing

- While you are thinking about a topic, it might be helpful to begin listing ideas as they come to you.
- Begin by writing down some potential topics, leaving enough room to add ideas relating to that topic later.
- Note the ways in which your ideas may relate. Are there any patterns emerging?
- You can arrange your list later to make it into a rough outline for your paper.

### Identity

- Psychological
- Self-image: positive or negative

### Culture

- Beliefs
- Religion—Christian dominance
- Assimilation into “mainstream America”

### Family

- Values
- Ancestry—where family originated from
- Traditions carried through the generations

## Talk With a Friend or Someone Else About the Topic

Explain your topic to a friend or anyone who will listen. Sometimes helping someone else understand helps you too. If there is no one around to listen, write the explanation in a letter. Make sure your explanation would be understandable to him/her.

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### **The following resources were consulted in the design of this handout:**

“Brainstorming.” The Writing Center. 2005. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/brainstorming.html>>.

Bullock, Richard. The Norton Field Guide to Writing. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006.

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*The College of Saint Rose Writing Center, 2007  
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