

## GENERATING IDEAS

Often, the hardest part of writing is coming up with ideas to write about. The following list of questions and suggestions is designed to help you get started and avoid the dreaded blank page.

- **Find a place to write** that inspires your creative process. If your room is too distracting, head to the library. If you need noise, turn on the radio. Figure out what works best for you and go with it.
- If the prospect of formal writing is too overwhelming, use **informal writing** to get some ideas down. Free write, scribble, jot some notes in a journal, and sketch out a web. You might surprise yourself and realize you have more ideas than you thought.
- Break down your project into **small, manageable sections**. Large assignments seem less daunting this way, and it might help you stay structured.
- Begin your draft with **one specific goal, idea, or question** in mind. To keep yourself on target, you may want to write this down in big letters across the top of your paper. That way, it can serve as a constant reminder to you.
- Push yourself into a strong argument by **asking yourself “So what?”** about your thesis or main idea. What are the implications? What does it mean? Contemplating ramifications means strengthening your thesis.
- It’s much easier for some people to speak about an idea than to write about it. **Talk through your ideas** if it helps. Tell anyone – your roommate, a friend, a Writing Center consultant, your professor, if available. If there’s no one around, talk to yourself, or better yet, into a tape recorder. What sounds good? What do you feel most comfortable explaining? You might be surprised by what you already know.
- **Ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc., until a later draft.** Let your ideas flow and deal with technicalities later. Editing as you write for the first time takes up time and can make you lose your train of thought. If you can’t resist editing, try typing with your computer monitor turned off.
- **Start wherever you feel most confident.** Writing an introduction can be pretty intimidating and there’s no rule that says you have to write it first. In fact, it may make a lot more sense if you write it after you’ve completed most of the body of your work.
- Once you have a draft, don’t be afraid to **change things around**. Examine what you have and decide if it works, if it’s organized well, if it makes sense. Cut and paste are wonderful options, whether you’re taking literal scissors and tape or clicks of the mouse.

- If you can't come up with *anything*, **give yourself a break**. Take a walk, go exercise, watch a little television or grab something to eat. Return to your work environment after clearing your head and try again. Opening a window can help, too.
- **Trust yourself**. Your mind will amaze you if you only give it time.