

## BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming provides a nearly guaranteed solution to writer's block. It's actually a very easy process.

1. Begin with a blank piece of paper or computer screen.
2. Write your paper's topic, say, "The Ethics of Cigarette Advertising" at the top.
3. Write down everything you can about the topic; omit nothing, no matter how bizarre, and don't stop until you are completely out of ideas. Don't worry about grammar or editing at this point.

Here's an example:

Paper Topic: The Ethics of Cigarette Advertising

- a) Cigarettes & cancer
  - b) Cigarette ads not on TV
  - c) Teenagers & cigarettes
  - d) Government subsidizes tobacco farmers
  - e) Macho image of Marlboro Man
  - f) Camel "Hard Pack?"
  - g) Anti-smoking groups
  - h) Surgeon General's warnings
  - i) Why don't we see pipe and cigar ads?
  - j) Nicotine is addictive
  - k) Cigarettes still very popular
4. Look at the list above, and reconsider the paper's topic. Ideas (d) and (i) stray from the topic, so cut them.
  5. Organize the remaining points. Idea (a) provides a decent place to start a draft, since it states a central truth about smoking.
  6. Next, try to logically arrange the other points in the order that you would use in your essay. It helps to think patterns into which ideas would fall, such as "Appeal of Ads," "Limits on Ads," "Future of Ads." You could write down these categories and then categorize your ideas from the brainstorming list. You'll end up with a working "outline" for the paper.
  7. New ideas may occur to you as you organize the material. That's okay as long as these ideas relate to the topic.
  8. You're almost ready to begin a draft, or at least an introductory paragraph. You still need to clearly state a thesis for assignments requiring one. (See The Writing Center's handout on thesis statements if you need it.)