

Freewriting Strategies

Freewriting is a writing strategy with the goal of getting you to worry less about content and organization. This process allows you to write about your topic—what you think, what you know and what questions you have. Once you have written openly about your topic, you can go through your information and highlight interesting ideas, and areas you want to know more about. With a highlighted topic, you can freewrite again on this new topic. After you have done this multiple times, you will have a collection of information that you can use as a roadmap for your assignment!

Do you need more structure to your freewriting?

Some writers need structure and guidance in their writing because sitting down to write can be difficult. Thoughts about writing can be wondering how long you should write for, where and how to start, and feeling stressed. It is important to remember that these are all common thoughts brought on by the writing process.

Constraint-based writing

Constraint-based writing is a helpful strategy. It gives you a challenge to help inspire your writing in a manageable way (Thorpe, 2021).

There are many different ways you can use constraints to guide your writing, such as **Oulipo**, a writing technique that uses mathematics and equations (Thorpe, 2021). You are not doing math with words in the literal sense, but it allows you to create a game for your organization and word choice (Thorpe, 2021). A famous example of an Oulipo is Georges Perec's novel titled, *A void* (originally written in French; 1969), where he wrote without using the letter **E**. The elimination of a letter is called a **lipogram**.

Other techniques include exhaustive descriptions (using the senses), sonnets, sestinas or other Oulipo-inspired constraints (Thorpe, 2021).

Constraint-based freewriting exercises

Constraint-based strategies can help you brainstorm or warm up your mind before starting your assignments. They can be directed at the time spent writing or what materials you use. With so many options, choose what constraints work best for you. Here are some strategies to try:

1. Write nonstop for five minute intervals

- Close all your research and open a word document. Set a timer for five minutes. Type non-stop, everything you know, think or wonder about your topic. After your timer goes off, go over the information and find a new idea to explain, and begin another timer.
- Do this cycle a number of times to gather your thoughts; this is a strategy called looping. Now you have a starting point for creating your assignment outline.

2. Write by hand

- Turn off all electronics and anything that may be distracting. Take out a notebook or piece of paper, and write your ideas by hand. Write everything that comes to mind without looking at your research. Make an effort to never let your pen come off the page.
- Do this cycle a number of times, and begin making diagrams and connections between ideas to start developing an outline.

3. Write for fun with a letter constraint

- Sometimes you just need to have fun with your writing to get away from the stress of academic work. Try writing on your assignment topic—or a random topic—for five minutes without using the letters **E** or **L**.

Example: Fun writing without using the letter E

I must! A thought. A spark.
Writing, now. A journal? A mass of words. No plans. No path. Just words.
That's not right. I start again. Scribbling, Jotting, Scratching Away—
with a longing for that blissful joy upon admiring a found mind to fall into.
Now, gaining satisfaction by pushing away sounds of dismay.
It's no trick. I'm just flowing to form fun writing.
~ SS

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