

Developing Ideas: Writing Exercises

Try these writing exercises to help transform your ideas into a story!

1. Freewriting

This technique consists of writing without stopping for a set amount of time. You can start off with a short period of time (2-5 minutes) and then build up stamina. Don't worry about censoring yourself or word choice; those are later revision concerns. Be open to details and connections that present themselves.

Freewriting/Looping

This variation on freewriting prompts writers to select one idea from your previous freewriting and free write about it for another 5 minutes. After reading over this writing, you can use the idea as a fresh starting point to keep freewriting. Repeat this loop until you have an outline or direction for your story.

Free write (2-5 min)



Select 1 idea and free write on it (5 min)



Read over and select an important part of the idea



Use this fresh starting point to free write (5 min)



Repeat until you have formed an outline or direction

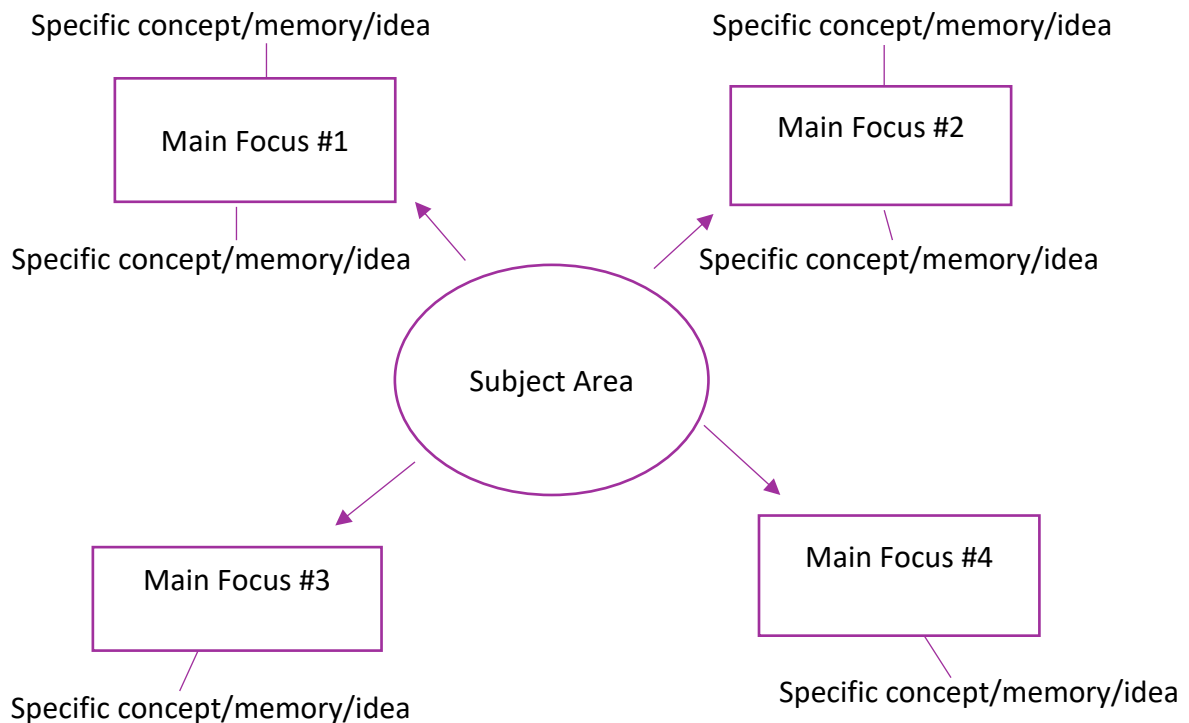


2. Clustering

The next approach is clustering, which diagrams how your ideas relate to one another. You start by making a bubble in the center of your page and writing down a subject area inside it. Next, you can start drawing arrows to more connected ideas. Once you've written down these main connections you can branch off these concepts to more specific ideas. This exercise is particularly fitting for those used to using flow charts or writing down quick notes.

Clustering Redux

Once you've created your cluster map, consider whether any of the circles pique your interest. You want the main focus and its branching concepts to be extensive enough to elaborate on, but also focused enough that you aren't trying to cram too much into one story. You can figure this out by creating new cluster maps with that main focus in the middle.



3. Listing

This last exercise gives writers the opportunity to write out their ideas and organize them in a more logical, linear fashion. It is well suited for those who want to organize their ideas and see their ideas in an overall context (ex. timelines, series of events, cause and effect).

Start by writing down a pivotal memory or idea. Then, jot down bullet points about this topic. Don't worry about their significance for now because even less useful ideas can lead to suitable ones. Now go back over the list and scratch out any ideas you don't want to include and add any you may have now thought of. It can be helpful to roughly number the order that you want to talk about them. If your topic is still too broad, consider selecting an idea from the list and using it as a focal point for a new list.

Step 1

Memory/event/focus: _____

- idea
- idea
- idea
- idea
- idea
- idea
- idea

Step 2

Memory/event/focus: _____

- ~~-idea~~
- Idea (4)
- ~~- idea~~
- idea (1)
- ~~-idea~~
- idea (6)
- idea (2)
- new idea (3)
- new idea (5)