

Freewrite

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Teacher Essay Guide

Why start with a freewrite before researching? Instead of first taking in what others are saying on a topic, the student puts their own understanding “out there” first. What’s their opinion, their knowledge, their take on the issue without other people chiming in first? Let them have a chance to stick their neck out first. It will also expose the “holes” in your teen’s knowledge and help concentrate research areas, decreasing the chance of wasting time on unproductive research. If it helps set their frame of mind, [watch this video](#) to boost their confidence to speak with conviction.

Step 1 - Freewrite

- **Gather** the brainstorm notes along with the list of questions about the topic from the previous brainstorm exercise. Have your teen keep those in front of them as they freewrite.
- **Freewrite** for as long as they can about the topic. I don’t set a timer here. Tell your teen to refer to their brainstorm notes/graphic organizer and list of questions to help them generate thoughts as they write. The goal is to simply get things down on paper. Don’t worry about writing well, just write. Do not edit during this time!
 - If they don’t get much written in the freewrite, before abandoning the topic, try having a big, juicy conversation with your teen about the topic and **jot down** notes while they talk. Some teens are still learning the skill of holding more complex and nuanced thoughts and then expressing those thoughts in writing at the same time. The older they get in their teen years the easier it will become for them.
 - SAVE THE FREEWRITE. They will use it later.

Step 2 - Analyze the Freewrite

- Let’s look over the freewrite and discover the nuggets of insight in it. Parent and student will each do their own analysis of the freewrite.
 - **Parent Analysis**
 - Read TWJ pages 83–84 Steps 1 and 2 in the Four Principles of Revision. It will help you analyze the freewrite and direct the student where to expand their writing and research.

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- Things to look for in the freewrite...
 - opinions
 - potential topic sentences
 - can you find 3 points and any supporting particulars?
 - areas needing research
 - thoughtful statements but ones that need support via research/examples/quotes.

- Student analysis

- Ask yourself:
 - What is the most important thing I'm trying to say in this freewrite? Write it down.
 - Did I stick my neck out on anything? Mark that line(s) where you did. If you didn't, then stick your neck out & take a stand now.
- Look over your freewrite and discover what nuggets are in it. As you read over your freewrite, look for these things:
 - potential topic sentences
 - can you find three points & any supporting particulars for potential body paragraphs?
 - areas needing research
 - statements that need support via research/examples/quotes.

Mark any that you find. Ask your parent for help, if you need it.

NOTE ON FREEWRITE. SAVE IT! It may have sentences in it your teen can use for their analysis or commentary within a body paragraph.