

Freewrite

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Teen Essay Guide

Why start with a freewrite before researching? Instead of first taking in what others are saying on a topic, you're putting your own understanding "out there" first. What is your opinion, your knowledge, your take on the issue *without* the influence of other people chiming in first? It will also expose the "holes" in your knowledge or questions you want answered, helping you concentrate your research areas and decrease time wasted on unproductive research. Don't be afraid to stick your neck out!

Step 1 - Freewrite

- **Gather** your brainstorm notes (or graphic organizer if you used that) and your list of questions about the topic from the previous brainstorm exercise. Keep these notes in front of you.

- **Freewrite** for as long as you can about the topic. No timer needed. Refer to your brainstorm notes/graphic organizer & list of questions to help generate thoughts as you write.

Remember! Your goal here is to simply get things down on paper. Don't worry about writing well, just write. Don't edit as you write! 50 lashes with a wet noodle if you do.

- If you don't get much written in the freewrite, before abandoning the topic, try having a big, juicy conversation with someone about the topic and ask them to **jot down** notes while you talk. Sometimes it helps to talk things out without having to worry about writing them down at the same time.

Step 2 - Analyze your freewrite.

- 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. **SAVE YOUR FREEWRITE!**