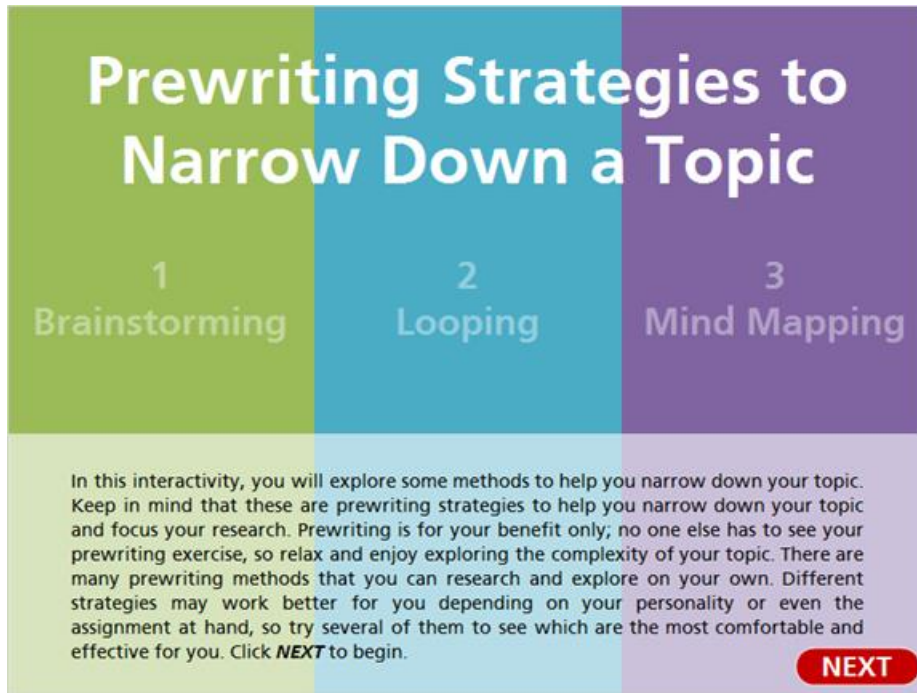


Module 2: Literature and Language Throughout History

Topic 3 Content: Prewriting Strategies to Narrow Down a Topic

Introduction



Prewriting Strategies to Narrow Down a Topic

1 Brainstorming 2 Looping 3 Mind Mapping

In this interactivity, you will explore some methods to help you narrow down your topic. Keep in mind that these are prewriting strategies to help you narrow down your topic and focus your research. Prewriting is for your benefit only; no one else has to see your prewriting exercise, so relax and enjoy exploring the complexity of your topic. There are many prewriting methods that you can research and explore on your own. Different strategies may work better for you depending on your personality or even the assignment at hand, so try several of them to see which are the most comfortable and effective for you. Click **NEXT** to begin.

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Topic 3 Content: Prewriting Strategies to Narrow Down a Topic

Brainstorming: Page 1

Page 1

Brainstorming involves coming up with a list of ideas and questions related to your topic. You may find it helpful to set a timer for ten or fifteen minutes. Then, get ready to jot down or record the following:

1. Your topic stated as a phrase or sentence
2. Any ideas related to your topic
3. Questions you may have related to your topic

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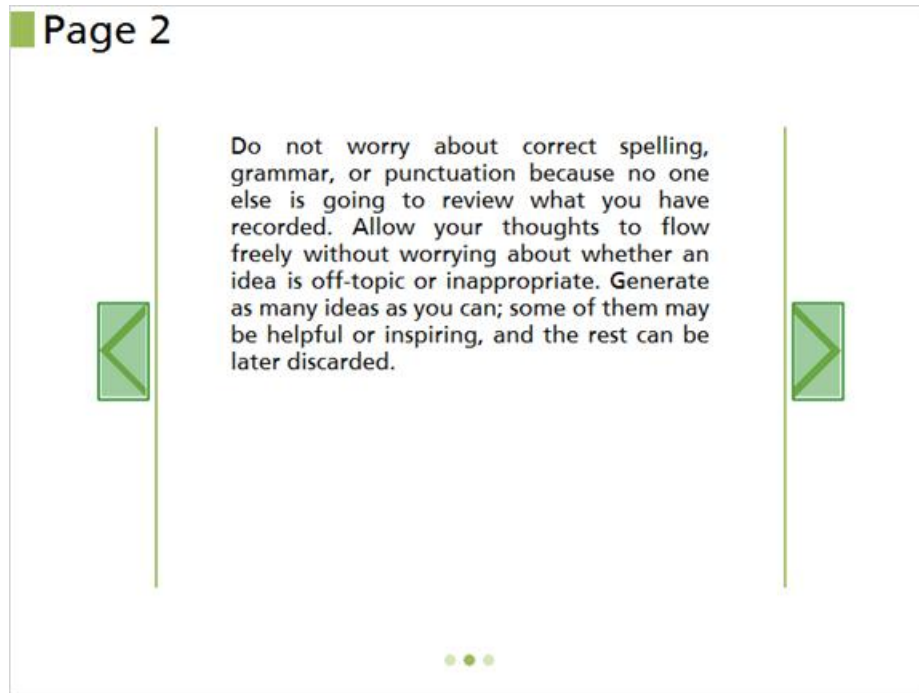
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Topic 3 Content: Prewriting Strategies to Narrow Down a Topic

Brainstorming: Page 2

■ Page 2

Do not worry about correct spelling, grammar, or punctuation because no one else is going to review what you have recorded. Allow your thoughts to flow freely without worrying about whether an idea is off-topic or inappropriate. Generate as many ideas as you can; some of them may be helpful or inspiring, and the rest can be later discarded.



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Brainstorming: Page 3

Page 3

After you have finished brainstorming, look over what you have written and highlight any ideas that you find interesting. Take some time to further explore any ideas or answer any questions that appeal to you, and feel free to add additional information or notes.

Click the image below to view an example of prewriting using brainstorming.



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Click the image below to view an example of prewriting using brainstorming.

Genetic engineering is unethical

Ideas

- cloning
 - lamb Dolly
- stem cell research
- GMO food
 - safety, healthy?
 - impact on environment
 - proprietary rights
- organic food
- other countries
- history
- DNA

Questions

- What's the difference between cloning and genetic engineering? Is cloning considered genetic engineering?
- Does stem cell research involve genetic engineering?
- How is genetic engineering done?
- What are the benefits?

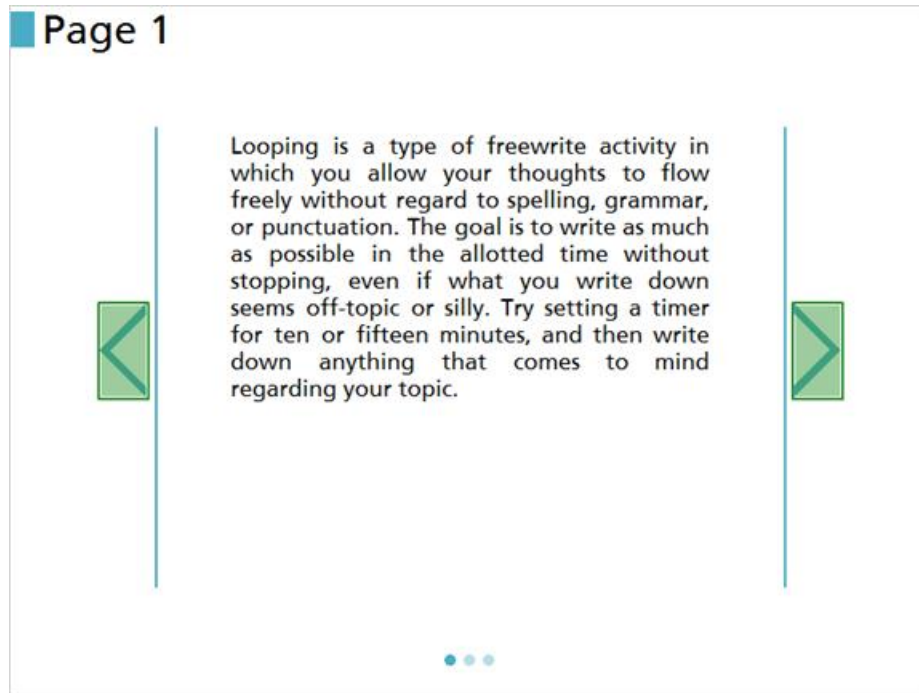
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Looping: Page 1

Page 1

Looping is a type of freewrite activity in which you allow your thoughts to flow freely without regard to spelling, grammar, or punctuation. The goal is to write as much as possible in the allotted time without stopping, even if what you write down seems off-topic or silly. Try setting a timer for ten or fifteen minutes, and then write down anything that comes to mind regarding your topic.



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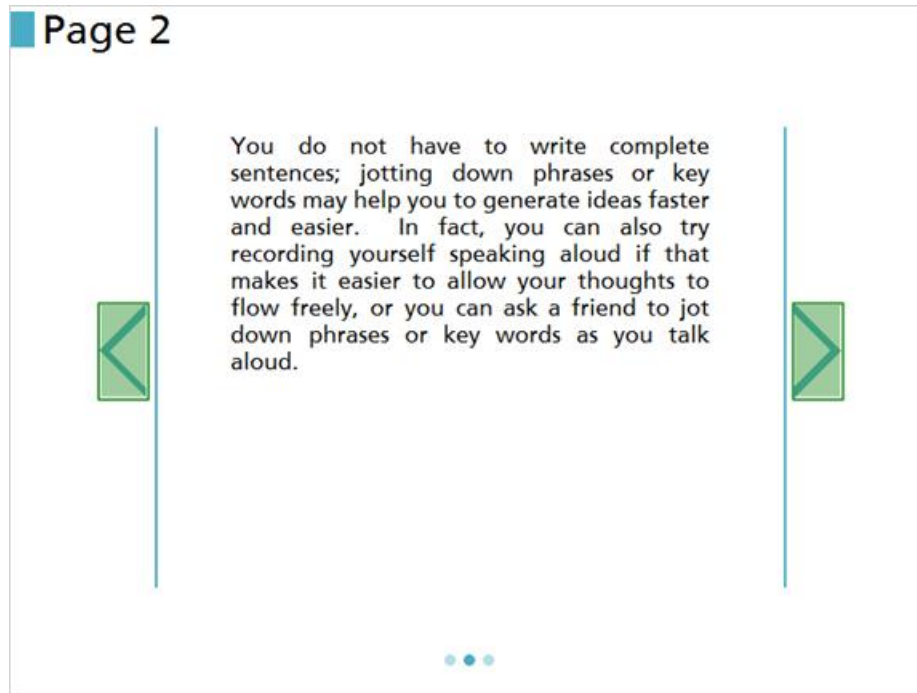
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Looping: Page 2

Page 2

You do not have to write complete sentences; jotting down phrases or key words may help you to generate ideas faster and easier. In fact, you can also try recording yourself speaking aloud if that makes it easier to allow your thoughts to flow freely, or you can ask a friend to jot down phrases or key words as you talk aloud.



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Looping: Page 3

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After the allotted time has passed, review what you have recorded and note the most interesting points. Choose one to focus on for another ten- to fifteen-minute session and repeat the exercise. You can loop as many times as you want. Each time, you will further narrow down the scope of your topic and make it more specific.

Click the image below to view an example of prewriting using looping.

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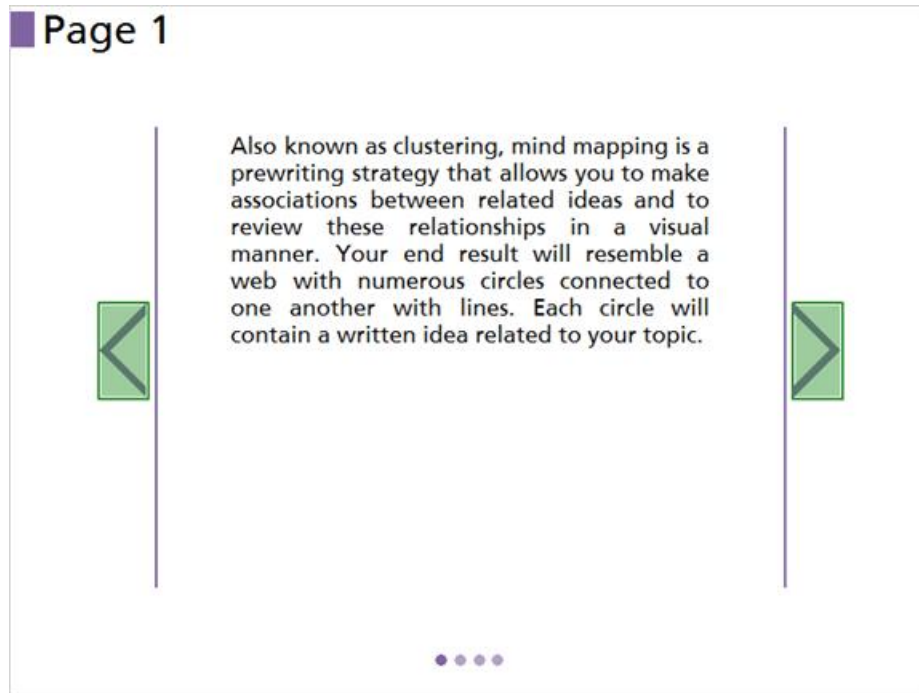
Click the image below to view an example of prewriting using looping.

Session 1: Drug Use	Session 2: Legalizing Marijuana	Session 3: Effects of Legalized Marijuana in Colorado	Session 4: Benefits of Legalized Marijuana in Colorado
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - medical - abuse - illegal drugs - marijuana - heroin - legal marijuana laws - legal drugs - caffeine - painkillers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - medical uses - recreational - states where it's legal - Colorado - Washington - other countries? - resulting effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - economy - addiction - society's response - unintended consequences - benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more tax revenue - increased safety through regulation? - law enforcement free to target other crime

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Mind Mapping: Page 1



Also known as clustering, mind mapping is a prewriting strategy that allows you to make associations between related ideas and to review these relationships in a visual manner. Your end result will resemble a web with numerous circles connected to one another with lines. Each circle will contain a written idea related to your topic.

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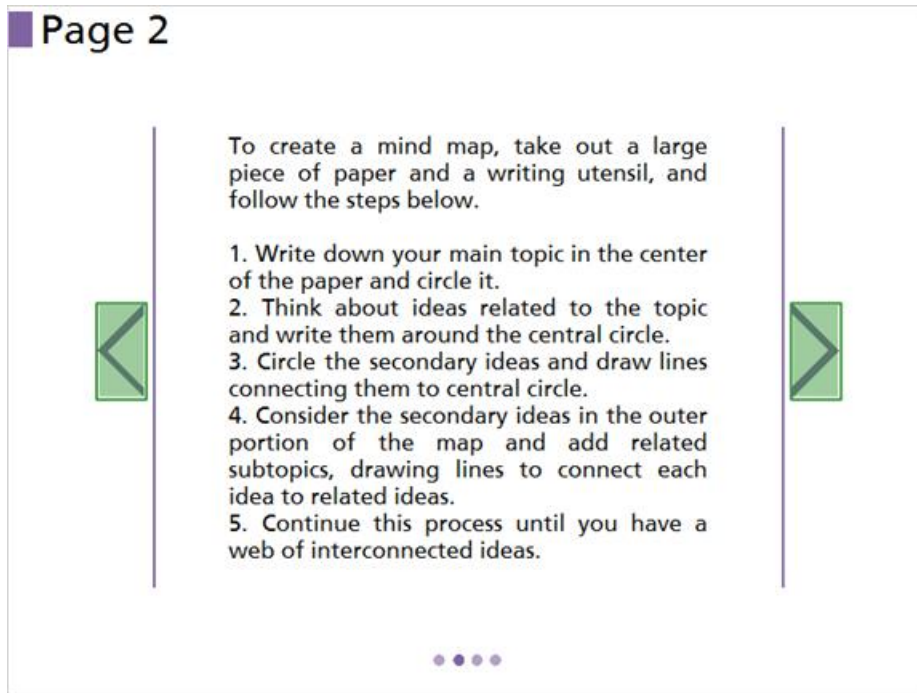
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Mind Mapping: Page 2

Page 2

To create a mind map, take out a large piece of paper and a writing utensil, and follow the steps below.

1. Write down your main topic in the center of the paper and circle it.
2. Think about ideas related to the topic and write them around the central circle.
3. Circle the secondary ideas and draw lines connecting them to central circle.
4. Consider the secondary ideas in the outer portion of the map and add related subtopics, drawing lines to connect each idea to related ideas.
5. Continue this process until you have a web of interconnected ideas.



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Mind Mapping: Page 3

Page 3

When you review your mind mapping exercise, you will likely find that the ideas that are farther away from the central topic are more specific and narrow in scope. Consider these specific ideas as a more focused topic for your paper.

Click the image below to view an example of prewriting using mind mapping. The blue circle indicates the initial, central topic of violence. The red circles indicate possible topics that have been narrowed in scope.



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Topic 3 Content: Prewriting Strategies to Narrow Down a Topic

Mind Mapping: Page 4

Page 4

What topics did you find in the mind mapping example that were narrowed down and could serve as a possible subject of a persuasive research paper? Perhaps a paper topic stemming from this mind map may include:

- Safety regulations used to prevent violent injuries in football
- The impact or fairness of movie ratings regarding violence in the film industry
- News coverage of violent mass shootings in schools such as Columbine

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