

Invention / Prewriting : Freewriting, Looping, and Analysis

Sometimes the best way to **get started** is to just **write down everything you are thinking without stopping**. Here are the rules of the **freewriting** game:

1. Grammar and spelling do not count, so don't worry about them or stop for them.
2. No idea is a bad idea, so don't cross out anything or erase anything. You never know if you can use it later.
3. Write for at least **10 minutes without stopping** or reading your work.
4. If you have a topic, write down everything you know about it. Describe it using your senses; compare and contrast it to similar topics; think about its causes and effects, as well as the problems it causes or the solutions it offers.
5. If you don't have a topic, do #4 in this list with the first idea you come to, regardless of how good or bad you think it is (see #2 for advice on good and bad ideas in this activity). Write about it until you've run out of things to say, or until you discover a topic you *really* want to write about. If you find a really cool topic, start writing about it right away.
6. **Remember to write as much as you can** – more ideas and points now will give you more possibilities later. Fewer now often results in frustration later.

Looping is simply a series of freewriting exercises done over an extended period of time, usually a day or two. Here are the rules:

1. Follow the freewriting rules above, then set the paper aside for at least an hour. Go do something else, and take your mind off your writing.
2. After you have left the paper alone for at least an hour, come back to it and **find one word, phrase, or sentence** that really interests you.
3. Repeat the freewriting instructions above using that word, phrase, or sentence as your topic. Feel free to depart from your original idea entirely. In looping, the idea is to generate tangentially related snippets of writing, all of which can be used either together or separately.
4. After you finish this freewrite, set it aside and go do something else for at least an hour. Then come back and do another loop of either the original freewrite or the one you just produced.
5. Repeat this activity until you have a topic, or, during the drafting and revision process, whenever you are unsure what more you can write about your topic.

When you **analyze** your freewriting, look for the following things:

1. Go to the end of the freewrite. In most cases, the **very last thing** you write is the most important thing you have to say – and is often a really good **thesis**, or starting point for your essay. Highlight it or copy and paste it to the front of your new draft.
2. Highlight any **points that are relevant** to your thesis. Copy and paste these to your draft, or write them out as sentences on another sheet of paper. Prioritize them in order of importance, as a way to begin organizing your work.
3. Make note of any **specific details or examples** that you think you can use, and look for places in your new draft where they might fit. Copy and paste them as appropriate under your new set of points.