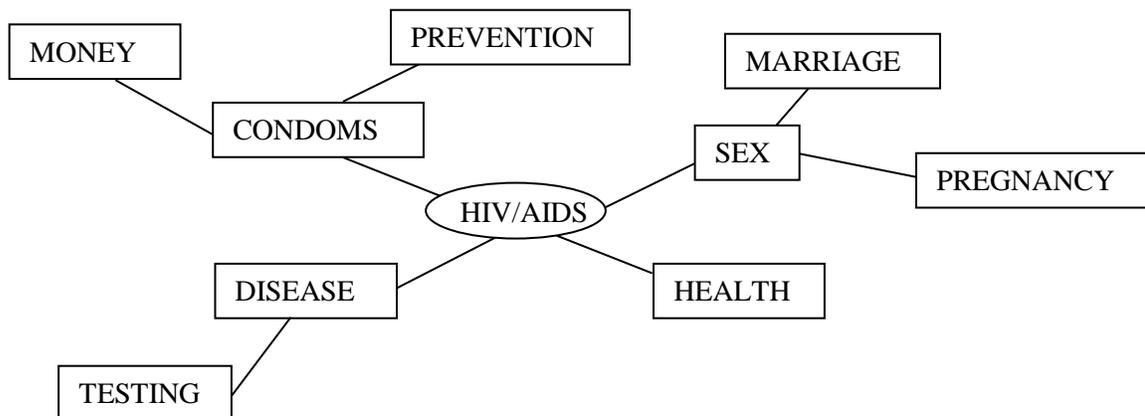


Getting Words on Paper:

Strategies for Brainstorming

- *What is brainstorming?* There are many techniques for brainstorming, and the purpose is to begin with a single topic and develop new ideas from that topic. Students can work together as a class, in pairs or groups, or brainstorm individually. The key is to begin developing ideas and thinking critically about the topic.
- *What are the benefits of brainstorming?* By using different brainstorming techniques, we use critical and creative thinking to develop new ideas while simultaneously working to improve our vocabulary. Also, by thinking critically about a subject and participating in developing ideas for topics of discussion or writing, we become more engaged in the course material and feel invested in the subject.
- *Brainstorming methods:*
 - **List of 100:** Writing a list of 100 can be a bit challenging, but it is a way to produce a great amount of ideas in a short amount of time. First, begin with a topic, like “List 100 things you like to do on the weekend” or “List 100 ways to increase environmental awareness.” After a topic is decided upon, give yourself about 20 minutes to write your list. It might be difficult, but try to make it all the way to 100 (if time is an issue, the list can be cut down to 50). When writing your list, it is important to know that you do not have to worry about issues of grammar or correctness, and it is okay if you repeat yourself. The key is to write without stopping and continue focusing on the topic. After you have generated the list, look over what you have written and note any repetition and/or group similar ideas. The ideas you have generated can be used for any number of purposes: class discussion, further research on a topic, etc.
 - **Clustering:** Beginning with a single word or idea, try to make a web of topics leading outward from the original topic. So, first choose a topic. After the topic is chosen, try to think of words or ideas that are related to the topic. After new ideas are written and connected to the original topic, new ideas/topics may be derived from any word on the web. Here’s an example:



Sometimes, it might be helpful to create clusters of ideas together with your class or with a partner. By doing this, students help each other develop more ideas than if you create clusters individually. Also, clustering as a class provides an opportunity to talk with classmates and have some fun while thinking critically.

Write your own future!

Getting Words on Paper:

Strategies for Prewriting



- *What is prewriting?* When you begin a project, it is useful to use writing as a way to generate ideas. Prewriting is a way of getting words on paper without paying much attention to issues of grammar or correctness. While it is important to focus on grammar and correctness in the final stages of writing, focusing too heavily on these issues when generating ideas will often hinder the process. Prewriting is a non-intimidating way to write ideas about a topic. It is similar to brainstorming, though it involves generating sentences or paragraphs and more complete thoughts.
- *What are the benefits of prewriting?* When we prewrite, we are using critical and creative thinking to develop ideas on a topic. Through prewriting, we can get more words on paper. More ideas are created, and we have a great amount of information to work with. By using brainstorming and prewriting together, we are generating more ideas and clarifying our knowledge of the topic.
- *Prewriting methods:*
 - **Freewriting** is a way to get words on paper quickly without stopping to think too much about whether it is grammatically correct. When freewriting, we begin with a topic and then try to write quickly without stopping while concentrating on the subject (5-10 minutes). You should allow yourself to write whatever comes into your mind without giving consideration to spelling or grammar. The main benefits of freewriting are:
 - it allows us to write without being concerned with correctness;
 - it is a way to generate a lot of writing quickly;
 - it helps build fluency in English and writing; and
 - it helps us focus on a topic.
 - **Sentence Stems:** Beginning with a partial sentence, try to complete the sentence with your own words. Then, continue writing on the subject for a short amount of time. Sometimes you can start with several sentence stems and choose the one that you prefer, or you can come up with sentence stems as a class or with a partner. Sentence stems are useful because often in the writing process the most difficult task is writing the first line. Here, the first line is given, thus taking away the intimidation of beginning. Examples:
 - When I first began learning English, I felt....
 - Corpus Christi is different from my hometown because....
 - When I think about writing, I think....
 - **Looping:** This activity takes some time, but using looping is a way to generate a great deal of writing on a given topic. First, you begin by writing about a topic (this can be freewriting or sentence stems). After you have written for a given amount of time (5-10 minutes), you should read over what you have written. When reading, underline one sentence that stands out as the strongest, or you can choose the one sentence you like the best out of the paragraph. Next, you'll use the underlined sentence as the first sentence in your next paragraph. Again, you'll be given another length of time (5-10 minutes) to write. This process can be repeated many times, and the goal is to generate a lot of writing while recording several ideas.

The information for this handout was compiled from the following source:

Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process* (2nd Edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

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