

# Presentation Skills Center

308 Park Library

## “Brainstorming” Topic Ideas

Brainstorming is the effort to generate an idea through some process of communicating concepts in different ways. When developing a topic for your speeches, consider these brainstorming methods:

**Free Writing:** Begin with an idea and process through down everything it makes you think about.

- This is a good way to find out what you know about the subject and what you’d like to learn about it.
- Start with a blank page and write the subject at the top, use a unique writing utensil, close your eyes while you write, ignore the quality of penmanship or message, and set a time limit (try 5 minutes).
- If you can’t think of what to say to start, just write about that first, and continue from there.
- Analyze your writing for concepts that could be turned into a thesis or part of your outline.

**Triangulation:** Look at a subject from three unique perspectives and search for ideas that interest you.

- Explain your topic in detail: components, mysteries or puzzles, identifying features, likeness to or difference from other topics.
- Track the subject over time: create a timeline, write a narrative, what’s impacted the subject over time?
- Draw it in relation to other ideas: how have others looked at it? To which field or fields is it related?

**Cube It:** Expanding on the concept of triangulation, cubing looks at six sides of a subject.

- Describe, compare, associate, analyze, apply, and argue for and against your subject.
- Did you find any interactions amongst the “sides?” Were there any patterns?
- Determine if any of the concepts can be used for the thesis or body of your speech.

**Pretend to be a journalist:**

- Ask “who, what, where, when, and how” in regards to your subject.
- Look at your answers to see if connections or concepts emerge.

**Go Beyond the Box:**

- If you spoke about this subject for another class, such as biology, math, art history, psychology, or economics, how would you adapt it for that occasion?
- Break the subject down into sub-topics and branch out into new ideas.

**Ask “What if?”:**

- The concept is that you ask “What if?” questions until you run out of ideas. (What if we all spoke the same language? What if dolphins could talk?)
- Based upon those questions, you could generate ideas that could lead to topics or thesis ideas.

**Similes**

- “(Your term here)” is/was/are/were like “(generate a list of words that fit here).” What ideas emerge?

Adapted from:

Miles, H. L., & Druckman, R.D.). (n.d.) Brain storm.. Retrieved from

<http://www.uwb.edu/getattachment/wacc/for-students/resources/handouts/brainstormhandout.pdf>