



UNIVERSITY OF
**DETROIT
MERCY**

Prewriting Strategies

[https://writingcenter.udmercy.edu/\(for resources\)](https://writingcenter.udmercy.edu/(for resources))

[http://udm.mywconline.com/ \(for appointments\)](http://udm.mywconline.com/ (for appointments))



The Writing Center
DETROIT MERCY

What is Prewriting?

- ⇒ Prewriting helps plan out a written project *before* we begin writing a project.
- ⇒ Prewriting helps writers avoid procrastination.
- ⇒ Prewriting helps us make thoughtful choices about the organization and structure of an essay or other written project

First Steps

- ⇒ Carefully review the project directions and rubric before you begin prewriting to ensure you include all required components and meet course expectations
- ⇒ Begin prewriting process before any drafts are due. (It does not make sense to turn in a plan for a project that has already been submitted).

What are Some Forms of Prewriting?

Freewriting: is just what it says—writing freely, whatever comes into your mind, without caring about spelling, punctuation, etc. It's a way to free up your thoughts, help you know where your interests lie. You can free write on paper or electronically.

Begin by setting a timer for five to ten minutes. The object is to keep your fingers moving constantly and write down whatever thoughts come into your head during that time about a topic. If you can't think of anything to say, keep writing "I don't know" or "This is silly" until your thoughts move on. Review your free write for any ideas that can be further developed and explored.

Idea Mapping: Mapping or diagramming helps you immediately group and see relationships among ideas. Mapping and diagramming may help you create information on a topic, and/or organize information from a list or freewriting entries, as a map provides a visual for the types of information you've generated about a topic. You draw your own diagrams, or use a mapping application (available for free online).

Outlining: A strong outline is like a road map for your project. Outlining can help you maintain a clear focus in your essay because an outline helps you see your whole paper in a condensed form, which can help you create a good plan for how you'll organize and develop your ideas. In many of your courses, you'll be asked to write a traditional, thesis-based essay. In this structure, you provide a thesis, usually at the end of your introduction, body paragraphs that support your thesis, and a conclusion to emphasize the key points of your paper. If your project requires the integration of sources, it can be extremely helpful to note where you will incorporate the source material in your outline as well.

Listing: Making a list can help you develop ideas for writing once you have a particular focus. If you want to take a stand on a subject, you might list the top ten reasons why you're taking that

particular stand. Or, once you have a focused topic, you might list the different features or aspects of that topic.

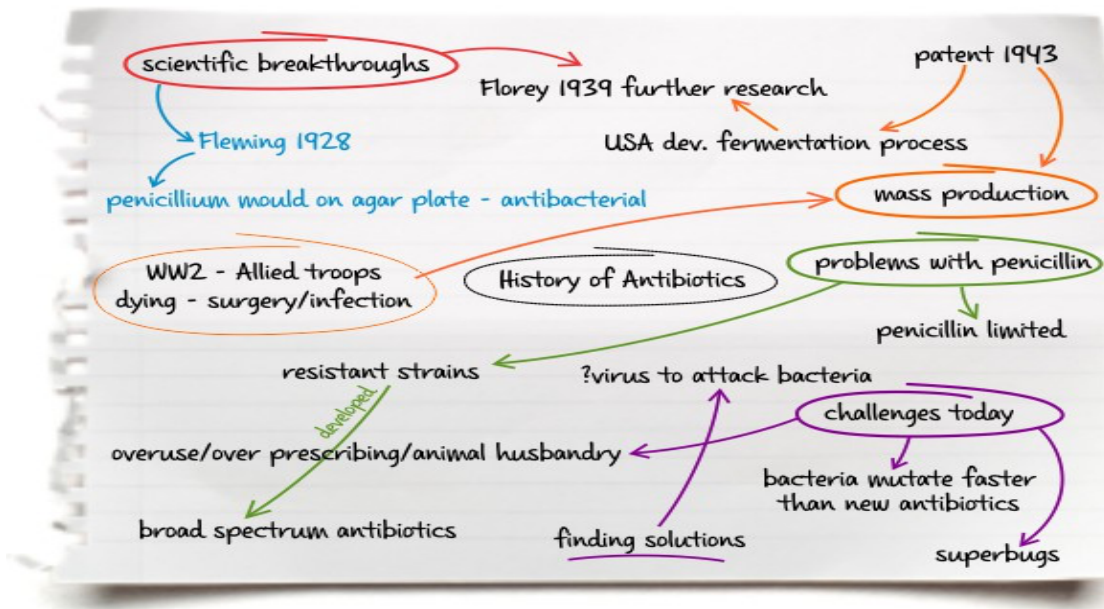
As you review and work with your initial list, you'll find yourself revising it by adding or deleting items. Doing an initial list is a quick and useful way to develop ideas for writing.

Researching: Visit the Library website or a Reference Librarian to uncover information about your topic. Using key search terms and phrases, employ the Library's databases or guides to discover what experts are discussing about this particular topic. Review the source materials uncovered in your search and use those to develop an argumentative thesis for a project.

Examples of Each Prewriting Strategy

Freewriting: Well....I remember this one quote about math. "No one ever learned good mathematics in a vacuum" or something like that. So what are all the things that this man never learned. He's probably not very sociable. I still haven't quite learned how to be a very social person. I don't know how to use computers I don't know how to google docs! Maybe Mr. Grunwald will look away and I can try to figure it out. But if not I dunno. I guess I can just go ahead and figure it out. There must be so many collapsing thoughts. I like thinking continuously in multiple levels. Everything is more humorous when you add another dimension. Like math. How do you get people to stop understanding. That's it! The box man is not understood, but she's trying to understand him by writing about him! Cool.

Idea Mapping

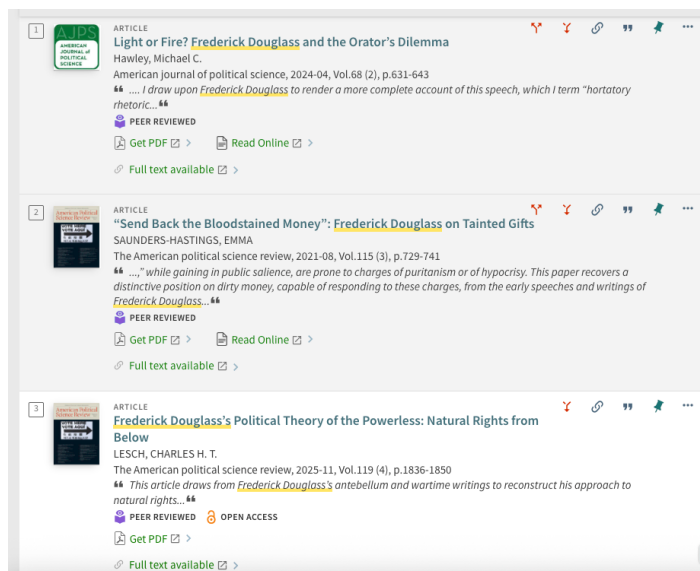


Outlining

- I. Introduction
 - A. Thesis: Frederick Douglass played a crucial role in securing the abolition of slavery and equality of African-American rights through his actions, ideas, and efforts as a lecturer, author, publisher, and politician.

- B. Roles/Arguments
- II. Douglass as Lecturer
 - A. History as slave and acquisition of education
 - 1. He experienced slavery
 - 2. His literacy allowed expression
 - B. Early lectures, including initial speech, before Garrison
 - 1. Success of initial speech
 - 2. Goals for future speeches
 - C. Effect of lectures on society
 - 1. Opened eyes
 - 2. Encouraged activism
- III. Douglass as Author/Publisher
 - A. Narrative's success and effect
 - 1. Springboard for newspaper
 - 2. Goals/hopes for newspaper
- IV. Douglass as Politician
 - A. Key trait for success
 - B. Goal of political activism
 - C. Efforts for Republican party
 - D. Significance of efforts
- V. Conclusion
 - A. Summarize arguments and efforts
 - B. Relevance now
 - C. What Douglass's Techniques Mean Today

Researching



Listing

Ways to live a greener life:

- Use natural cleaning products
- Walk or bicycle to places nearby
- Don't use delivery services
- Recycle cans and bottles
- Use recycled products
- Take public transportation
- Shop seconhand