

CUBING

Imagine a cube, which has six sides, on each of which is written a different command:

COMMANDS

Describe it. What does it look like? Colors, shapes, sizes, definitions.

Compare it. What is it similar to? What is it different from?

Associate it. What does it make you think of? What comes to mind? It can be similar things, different things, places, people, memories, etc.

Analyze it. How is it made? What are its parts?

Apply it. What do you do with it? What can it be used for?

Argue for or against it. Take a stand. Any reason will do—sensible, silly, or anywhere in between.

RULES

1. Do all six perspectives.
2. Move fast. Don't allow yourself more than 3-5 minutes on each perspective.

FREEWriting

Give yourself a time limit, like three to five minutes. Use a clock to time yourself. Write out your thoughts non-stop. If you're searching for a topic, write down everything that comes to your mind. Keep in mind certain subjects that you're interested in or would like to know more about. If you already have a topic, write down everything you can think of that could expand or narrow that topic. Don't worry about finding the "best" way to say something, and forget about your grammar and spelling. Don't stop typing or put down your pen until the time limit is up. If your mind goes blank, write down whatever is in your head—your feelings, frustrations, daydreams—until your thoughts return to your topic.

Freewriting is good for working out your thoughts and for producing raw material. You can extend the time limit to 10 or 15 minutes after you get warmed up. When you have finished, you can throw away the irrelevant information and organize or refine what is pertinent to your assignment.