

# PRE-WRITING

## Strategies for Generating Ideas

### 1. Listing

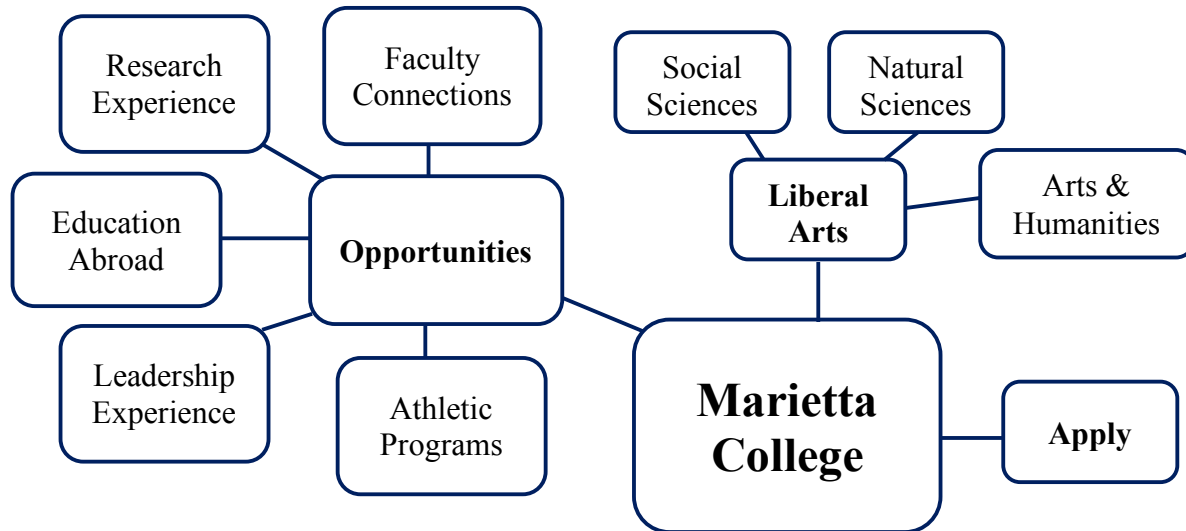
**What it is**—Listing is a process of quickly recording as many ideas as possible in a short amount of time.

**How to do it**—Set a timer for 3-5 minutes and list as many ideas as you can. When time is up, review your list and start grouping ideas into common themes. For example, maybe you have a list of “causes” or a list of “possible solutions” or a list of “haunted places.” You can repeat this process if you notice that there are a few ideas that do not have a clear category yet. You can also use a topic or theme from one of your lists to try one of the other techniques below.

### 2. Mind-Mapping

**What it is**—A method for visualizing the relationships between ideas; mapping is similar to listing.

**How to do it**—Write a topic or keyword on the center of a blank page. Circle or underline it, or highlight it. Think of other ideas, and connect them to the central idea by using lines (this may look like the spokes of a wheel, or a spider’s web). Continue to cluster ideas around each other. Review the clusters that interest you, and look carefully at the relationships between your ideas.



### 3. Free-Writing & Looping

**What it is**—A technique for generating a lot of content by writing non-stop for a period of time.

**How to do it**—Set a timer for 3-5 minutes (or longer, if you like), and write down everything you’re thinking about as quickly as you can. Don’t worry about whether it “sounds smart” or looks good; just write as much as you can until time is up. When time is up, look back at your writing and underline or highlight the ideas that interest you. Use these highlighted areas as the “seeds” for a new free-writing session. You can repeat this process as many times as you like.

## 4. Brainstorming

**What it is**—A strategy you can use individually or in groups to quickly generate content.

**How to do it alone**—Spend some time reading, listening to podcasts, or watching videos about a topic that interests you, and then set a timer for a few minutes and either talk to yourself out loud or write down any ideas that come to your mind. Don't censor or edit yourself; just record every idea or thought you have about the topic.

**How to do it with a group**—In your group, make sure you have someone whose role will be to record information. Then, have a discussion of what ideas, questions, or resources you all have in mind. You'll notice similar themes or trends beginning to emerge, which may be a good starting point for additional individual brainstorming, free-writing, or listing.

## 5. Asking Six Questions

**What it is**—A process of asking yourself (and recording your answers to) the six journalistic questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How. This process allows you to focus on your target audience, your purpose, and your ideas. This works well in combination with the Mind-Mapping strategy.

**How to do it**—With a topic you've generated from one of the other methods, try to answer each of the following questions. You can also use a variety of pre-writing methods in between these steps.

### Who?

Who does it? Who is affected by it? Who leads it? Who helps with it? Who can solve it? Who started or discovered it?

### What?

What is it? What is the problem? What is the cause? What can be done about it? What has already been tried? What has not yet been tried? What resources are necessary?

### Where?

Where does it happen? Where is the source of it? Where is the problem visible? Where are the solutions?

### When?

When did it start? When did people notice? When were solutions attempted? When did it become popular? When did it lose popularity? When does something need to be done about it?

### Why?

Why did it happen? Why does it matter? Why didn't other solutions fix it?

### How?

How does it affect people? How can it be understood? How can it be addressed? How can we make it better?