Prewriting Ideas

Use these prewriting ideas to help you find a topic to write about. These ideas can also help you focus, explore, or narrow your topic.

Brainstorming people  Quickly list the names of people you could describe. Then list words that describe each person.

Brainstorming places  Quickly list the names of places you have visited. Then list words that describe each place.

Free-associating  Write the word cheery, dreary, scary, or weary. Then write the first word, phrase, or sentence that comes to mind. Keep writing until a description begins to take shape.

Remembering sensory experiences  Think of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures you have experienced. Then choose one and describe it.

Talking and listening in pairs  Choose a partner and describe an object or a person to him or her. Then ask your partner to name the object or person. Reverse roles and repeat this process.

Showing and telling  Present an object to your classmates. Then ask them to describe it as completely as possible.

Taking notes  Choose a subject you wish to describe. Research the topic and take notes from your reading or your observations. List sensory details and special characteristics of the topic.

Looking at art  Study paintings, photographs, or drawings. Use books, magazines, newspapers, or a local museum as resources. Describe, in notes or orally, what you see.

Listening to music  Listen to a piece of music you like. Close your eyes and let the melody paint a picture for you. Then describe the people or scenes you imagined.

Dramatizing  Pretend to be a character in a play. Act out a scene. Then have your classmates describe the kind of character you are.

Observing  Carefully study a flower, insect, animal, or fountain. Then write notes about how it looks, sounds, smells, feels, behaves, or changes.