ORGANIZING YOUR IDEAS FOR YOUR RESEARCH PAPER

Sometimes you will be able to plan the structure of your writing first: organizing your ideas before you begin to write will help you to plan what to write and how to write it. Other times you may want to get your ideas down first and then use an organizing strategy to help you check your logic. Any pre-writing organizing you do should be tentative--a sketch, a list, a scribbled map that you use flexibly but could abandon if you find it is not working well as a structure. You can often find ideas and order as you write.

ORGANIZING STRATEGIES--SEE WHICH ONES WORK BEST FOR YOU

1. **LIST-GROUP-LABEL (EXAMPLE ON BACK):**
Create an organization that "grows" out of your ideas
   a. First, brainstorm or list your ideas
   b. Group or chunk together similar ideas in the list.
   c. Give each group a name or label based on the logic you used to group them
   d. Check your group labels. Make them parallel in form
   e. Regroup if necessary to reduce the number of groups, labelling new " chunks" in the same way
   f. Create a hierarchical structure by putting the main topic at the top, group labels at the second level and items in the groups as sub points under each group name
   g. As you create your hierarchy, select and rearrange the ideas, adding new ones if necessary to balance and complete the structure

2. **DIVIDE AND CATEGORIZE**
Divide the topic into categories; brainstorm under each
   a. Brainstorm titles or categories that fit in with your topic
   b. Rearrange these titles to find a sequence that seems best
   c. Brainstorm ideas under each title
   d. Brainstorm ideas to include an introduction and conclusion
   e. Then from each list, choose the best ideas to include

3. **LIST READER'S QUESTIONS**
Predict questions a reader might ask about your topic
   a. Arrange these questions in the order a reader would ask them
   b. Write to answer these questions

4. **CREATE A FLOW CHART**
Use a flow chart to order ideas
   • This strategy is especially useful when you are describing a process

5. **USE INDEX CARDS:**
   a. Write down each separate main point on an index card
   b. Move the cards around until you find a good order and flow for the ideas

6. **MAKE AN OUTLINE**
   a. This can be an informal sketch of key ideas or a formal outline using sentences which each assert a key point about the topic
   b. Arrange the key ideas or sentences in a logical and progressive sequence

7. **USE FILEFOLDERS FOR LARGER PROJECTS**
   a. File information for each subtopic in a separate hard copy or digital folder
   b. Use one of the other strategies above to organize the subtopics once you have finished gathering your research.

<h1 style="text-align:center">EXAMPLE: LIST - GROUP - LABEL</h1>

A possible organization for the William Morris topic from the handout on "Exploring" (Exercise 2: Mapping)

HIS ART:	HIS BUSINESS:	HIS OTHER INTERESTS
decoration	The Firm	Oxford
painting	Kelmscott Press	Ideas
poetry		Friends
		Socialism
		Arts and Crafts movement

When creating a hierarchy from these grouped ideas, we could divide up the large "Interests" group into more issues:

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