CHAPTER THREE

Ideas into Text

GETTING STARTED
LIGHTNING RESEARCH
INVENTION
THE THREE APPEALS
DISCUSSION
SOONER RATHER THAN LATER

GETTING STARTED

For many students, just getting started can be the most difficult writing task. As novelist Neil Gaiman says, "Being a writer is a very peculiar sort of a job: it's always you versus a blank sheet of paper (or a blank screen) and quite often the blank piece of paper wins."

Of course, while it might be comforting to know that even bestselling authors have trouble writing, that doesn't help *you* much when you have an essay to finish and a deadline to meet. Fortunately, over the years, writers have come up with a number of strategies for generating ideas and turning them into text, many of which we will discuss in this chapter.

Don't get frustrated, though, if your first tactic doesn't work. Maybe freewriting doesn't pan out this time, so you try doing additional research on your topic. Perhaps talking with your best friend about the assignment is a bust, but things start to click when you make a list of everything you know about the subject, and everything you need to know. Make a "cluster," ask the "journalist's questions," analyze your audience. *Some* strategy for getting started will eventually pay off.

If you are given complete freedom to choose your own topic, you'll want to find something you can write about with passion. Essayist Phillip Lopate advises students to "figure out something on your own, some question to which you don't already have the answer when you start." For Lopate, this

often involves extending sympathy to those who are unlike us: "We know we should be more open to others, but we're very self-pre-occupied." Investigating the lives and opinions of "the other" can be a fascinating way into an essay.

In first- and second-year classes, however, instructors are more likely to provide their students with a list of focused **writing prompts**, or assignments. Let's say, for example, that your first assignment of the semester is this: "Write an essay on the challenges first-generation college students face when attempting to complete their undergraduate degrees."

Usually, your professor will provide further instructions, either in class or as part of the prompt, but suppose the sentence above is all you have to go on. What in the world do you do first?

LIGHTNING RESEARCH

Author Geoff Dyer's motto is "If you're not overprepared, you're underprepared." You'll probably do the bulk of your research *after* you've crafted a thesis and sketched out a plan for your essay, skills we'll cover in the next chapter, but in the Internet Age we tend to look first for answers online, almost without thinking.

In the early days of the internet, professors would nearly always suggest that students begin their research with print sources. Now, of course, most professors themselves begin researching online, and this book assumes that when you're really curious about a topic, the first thing you're likely to do is run an internet search, most likely on Google, or to see if there is a relevant Wikipedia page.

You might think of your initial searches as "lightning research." At this stage, you want credible sources, of course, but you should primarily be getting an overview of your topic, as though you were flying above a small country in an airplane, noting a mountain range here, a coastline there, a large city somewhere in between. In lightning research, a source that you wouldn't necessarily cite in an academic essay—someone responding to a social media post, for instance—might still bring up a point that is worth pursuing with more credible sources.

Chapter 5 is devoted to research, in particular to assessing the validity of the sources you plan to use. The focus of this chapter is on the very early stages of planning, when you're looking for relationships between ideas and generating connections that didn't immediately occur to you.

So once you sit down and make that initial search on Google or Bing or Wikipedia, what do you do with the results? Two basic strategies are particularly useful:

1. *Make notes as ideas occur to you*. There's nothing quite like that first flush of recognition: "*Ah*, that's how these two apparently unlike ideas might be linked." Unfortunately, these moments of recognition can be fleeting, so you want to write them down as they occur to you, either in a notebook or in a digital document.
2. *Store the results of your most productive searches*. That could mean bookmarking a site, or printing it out, or emailing yourself a link. It's best, obviously, to include a brief note summarizing the contents of the site.

Look over what you have, and, without yet getting too bogged down in individual sources, use what you've learned in the first 20 or 30 minutes to play around with your ideas, to group those theories and examples that seem to be related.

INVENTION

Freewriting

Classical rhetoricians used the term "invention" to describe the full range of getting-started activities. We'll look specifically at Aristotle and one of his most famous invention techniques in the next section, but let's begin with an activity for turning ideas into text that you are probably already familiar with: freewriting.

Professor Peter Elbow advises students, "Do lots of freewriting and raw writing and exploration of the topic—writing in whatever style comes out. Put all your effort into finding the best ideas and arguments you can, and don't worry about your tone." Elbow isn't alone in championing freewriting. Just about any writer who's ever been blocked has used this technique as a way to overcome that inner critic who is perpetually dissatisfied.

The "rules" of freewriting are pretty basic: Choose a short amount of time—5, 10, or 15 minutes are standard—then start writing, and don't stop until the time is up. Don't worry about spelling or grammar or style—just see what you can come up with in a limited chunk of time.

Here's a five-minute freewrite on our essay topic about the challenges first-generation college students face:

> I'm not a first-generation college student so right away I'm thinking this is not going to be an easy topic for me. On the other hand, I do know a lot of first-generation students, well, not a lot, but some. There are some in our class, I know from the first day's introduction. In fact, the guy sitting next to me is first-generation, I'm pretty sure.

> I could ask him about his experiences. But how? Isn't he going to be offended if I'm using him as the subject of my experiment? But maybe I'm overthinking it. Maybe he *wants* to talk about it. Maybe I could ask the teacher after class what she thinks, or she could tell everyone, if you're willing to talk about your experiences with other students, let everyone know. That's actually a really good idea.

While there's not much, if any, material that could actually be used in an essay, this freewrite has managed to (1) recognize a potential problem with the assignment (the writer is not a first-generation college student), (2) identify a possible work-around (talking to a classmate who is), (3) detect a second potential problem (asking that student for information could be awkward), and (4) formulate a way to gather the information (asking the instructor to make a full-class announcement).

In her excellent book *Writing Down the Bones*, Natalie Goldberg argues for freewriting because of its ability to cut us loose from feeling responsible for every utterance we jot down on the page. "We think our words are permanent and solid and stamp us forever," Goldberg says. "That's not true. We write in the moment." For Goldberg and Elbow, and so many others, the beauty of freewriting is not only the freedom promised in its name, but how quickly it can be done and how frequently it generates something useful for the writer.

Listing

When you go grocery shopping for the week, chances are you make a list beforehand. If you're savvy, you try and organize the list by which items are in which aisles, but even if you just jot down what you need on a piece of paper, you're in much better shape than if you went to the store unprepared. Not having a list means you are more likely to wander aimlessly, to buy things you don't need, and to forget the things that you do.

In his article "10 Reasons Why We Love Making Lists," journalist Linton Weeks sings the praises of list-making, pointing out that lists "bring order to chaos," "help us remember things," and "relieve stress and focus the mind." Billionaire Richard Branson is another advocate of making lists. Among Branson's tips are "Always carry a notebook," "Write down every single idea you have, no matter how big or small," and "Make your goals measurable so you know if your plans are working."

You'll find that many of the virtues of lists in general apply to those you make when preparing to write your essay. Lists help you focus on your writing task, remind you of what you've been thinking, and let you know which issues you've addressed and which you haven't. Like freewriting, list-

ing releases the writer from any obligation to show cause and effect or to favor one idea over another. Therefore, a list, like a freewrite, tends to have the same feeling of randomness. However, unlike a freewrite, a list can be as long or short as you want.

A quick list generated on the topic of the challenges faced by first-generation college students might look something like this:

- I need to do some research on first-generation college students.
- What percentage are they of the total population of incoming freshman?
- So, statistics (ask professor or tutor where to look).
- My professor keeps saying a general web search is mostly a waste of time. So Google Scholar or Google Books? Library database?
- It would also be good to get the *stories* of first-generation students. What did they face before college? How hard was it to get here?
- Interview guy who sits next to me?
- Are there any movies on this?
- How realistic is it for these students to actually finish college? (That sounds harsher than I mean it to.) Statistics again.
- What exactly *are* the challenges? List them all, then look for the ones that seem easiest to write about.

Often, one item in a list will seem particularly promising, and that item can generate its own list. Suppose this student finds the idea of interviewing his classmate a particularly promising source of information. This might, in turn, lead to a list of interview questions:

- Where were you born?
- Where were your parents born?
- What do your parents do?
- Why didn't they go to college?
- Do they support your going to college?
- Why do you want to go to college?
- What's the biggest challenge you've faced so far?
- What's the biggest challenge you think you'll face in the future?

People who habitually make lists (and I confess I'm one of them) find that list-making not only brings clarity to their days, but it also helps them prioritize—to distinguish the important from the trivial. Especially if you are *not* a particularly organized person, a list can be a very useful tool, indeed. And there's nothing quite as satisfying as drawing a great big line through something you've worked hard on and finally completed.

Timesaver Tip: Make lists throughout the essay-writing process. Lists are handy for getting started on your essay, but they are also useful when you're halfway through the paper, and even when you think you're just about finished. Like shoppers making their way through a store, you can cross things off your list as you complete them so you're always sure what still needs doing and what's already been done.

Clustering

Different writers have different learning styles, and some of us need a visual element in the invention activity. Sophisticated "mind mapping" apps like iThoughts can now be downloaded online, but you can still cluster the old-fashioned way, with a pen and a piece of paper.

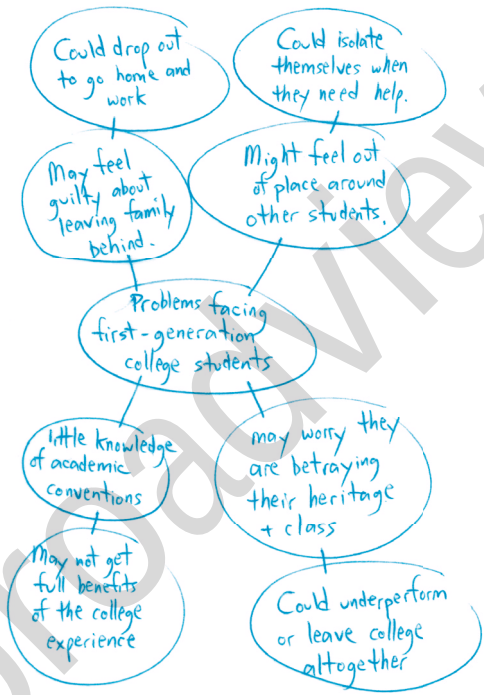

Figure 3.1 *Clustering*

Clustering, like the other invention activities we have covered, is usually done quickly and spontaneously. Generally, a cluster begins from a single word or phrase located in the center of the page. You draw a circle or box around it, then draw a line out to the first idea you associate with the

main idea. Other lines extending from the secondary idea lead to specific examples, or further sub-headings.

The point of this invention activity is to group related ideas together. Eventually, you're likely to end up with a rough outline for your essay that sometimes looks a bit like a flow chart.

Continuing with our essay about the problems first-generation college students face to complete their degrees, we might sketch out a cluster that looks like Figure 3.1.

The Journalist's Questions

Asking questions is the quickest path to answers, so you should take any opportunity you have to generate a question set. In that vein, nonfiction writers have long relied on the journalist's questions: *Who? What? When? How? Where? Why?* These one-word questions help journalists thrown into the midst of a chaotic scene to remember to get the basic information for their stories. The questions turn out to be equally useful when writing a celebrity profile—or an academic essay.

As with the other invention activities, the journalist's questions have no single "correct" outcome—they are instead designed to help you find your way into your essay. Here are just a few of the many possible questions that might result from using these key questions for our essay on first-generation college students:

- *Who* are first-generation students?
- *What* do they have in common? What are their main problems, their main goals?
- *When* did they make their decision to come to college? Is this something recent, or have they been thinking about it since they were children? Do their parents support their decision to become college students?
- *How* will they cope with being first-generation students? Will they get extra support services? Will they isolate themselves from non-first-generation students?
- *Where* are they coming from? Are they mostly locals, or from other states, provinces, or countries?
- *Why* are they the first in their families to go to college? Was it difficult to make the leap to college? What prevented their parents from attending college? Why are they at our particular campus?

As you can see, one question quickly leads to another, with the activity generating multiple avenues for further research.

Journaling

One of the most time-honored ways for writers to generate raw material they may use later is to keep a journal. Granted, some students associate keeping a journal with New Age philosophies, and many of the titles of books on journaling support that belief: *Writing as a Way of Healing*, or *Creating a Visual Autobiography of Your Authentic Self*, or *A Spiritual Quest*. If you wish to find out more about your own psychological workings, a journal can be an immensely important tool. However, even if you are the sort of person who cringes when hearing terms like "Human Potential Movement" and the "Eternal Now," a journal can still be a handy repository for ideas. Think of it as a jar in which you toss loose change, knowing those coins will come in handy the next time you are broke.

Hardcore journal-keepers often decorate their journals. They draw or paint on the covers, embellish the pages, and dutifully save each journal once it is full. For others, a journal is a record of a specific time and place: throwing it away when it is complete is a sign of moving on. There was even a popular book called *Wreck This Journal* that asked its owners to chew on and poke holes in the pages, to scratch and staple them together, to cover them with mud.

Whatever you decide to do with your journal physically, turn to it mentally whenever you feel the need to record something potentially valuable. Among the most common uses for academic journals are the following:

- Responding to a reading.
- Evaluating an argument by another writer.
- Copying out quotations from other writers.
- Jotting down your own ideas.
- Asking questions.
- Providing answers.

Indeed, a writer's journal can be a home for all the invention activities we've discussed so far. As writing theorist Ken Macrorie says, "A journal is a place for confusion and certainty, for the half-formed and the completed."

Some instructors award course credit for journals that they periodically collect and evaluate. If that's the case in your class, your professor will obviously provide you with the details of what's expected of your journal. However, whether or not anyone else reads your journal, keeping one has a very significant benefit for you as a college student: it forces you to write, and the more you write, the easier writing becomes.

Timesaver Tip: Save everything you write. Whether it's a list or a cluster, a freewrite or a question set, *don't throw it away*. If you're writing on a computer, simply save the file with an easy to remember name like "Pre-writing for First-Generation Essay." Or buy a journal and become one of the many writers who have found these personal notebooks, to quote author Ralph Fletcher, the key to "unlocking the writer within you."

THE THREE APPEALS

The title of a famous scholarly article by linguist Walter J. Ong, "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction," suggests a potential problem for all writers. Even when you are writing for just your professor, you will always necessarily be *imagining* your audience, who will probably be some version of yourself.

Nevertheless, most college writing instructors will expect you to have an audience in mind, even if it is partially fabricated. Therefore, let's take the prompt we've been working on and add an audience to focus the rhetorical situation:

> Write an essay on the challenges first-generation college students face when attempting to complete their undergraduate degrees. The audience for your essay is the administrators of your college. Your essay should convince them to either increase or decrease financial aid for first-generation students. Assume that funding is limited, so that if financial aid increases for these students, it will decrease for all other students, and vice versa.

Suddenly, with the addition of a few sentences, the possibilities for your essay have narrowed tremendously. Now that you know your audience, you can begin to analyze which approaches will work best to convince school administrators of your point of view.

Let's say for the moment that all the pre-writing you have done so far has made you sympathetic to the challenges faced by first-generation students, so you decide to support an increase in their financial aid. How are you going to persuade administrators to follow your recommendation?

At this point, it's worth joining 2,000 years of writers and turning to the Greek philosopher and rhetorician Aristotle for some advice. For Aristotle, invention meant "discovering the best possible means of persuasion." He discusses a number of activities involved with "*inventio*"—defining terms, deciding whether the argument is right for the venue, judging the seriousness of the topic, and so on—but perhaps his most famous invention strategies are the "three modes of persuasion" or "the three appeals":

Logos: reason
Pathos: emotions, values, and beliefs
Ethos: the speaker's and reader's credibility

When you appeal to *logos*, you speak to your audience's logical side. In an ideal world, the appeal to *logos* would be the only method of persuasion necessary. However, as you know, our world is far from ideal, so writers frequently turn to *pathos* to win over their audiences. The appeal to *pathos* stirs up an audience—it doesn't just make them think; it makes them *feel*.

If your audience already agrees with you, the appeal most likely to work is *pathos*. If you or a family member has ever donated money to a charity, you may already be familiar with the appeal to *pathos*. Nonprofit groups share mailing lists, so a $50 donation to Save the Children might result in requests for money from the Children's Health Fund, UNICEF, World Vision International, and so on. These entreaties will likely include not just heart-rending text about the children's plights but also photographs of doctors in refugee camps, their stethoscopes held against the chests of visibly starving infants whose eyes are wide and pleading. These nonprofits know that you are already sympathetic to the *logos* of helping those in need, but without the persuasion of *pathos* you may be unwilling to part with your money.

On the other hand, if your audience is likely to be resistant to your argument, you need to establish your credibility as a speaker who can be trusted, this time using the appeal to *ethos*. Say, for instance, that your audience is non-first-generation students who face the prospect of losing out on financial aid. You can assume that presenting yourself *and* them as trustworthy souls who want what's best for the college—*good people*, in short—will be a useful tactic in winning some support for your cause.

Obviously, the college administrators in our prompt will have their own biases, but let's work under the assumption that they are genuinely open to both sides of the argument. As a result, they may be moved by all three of the appeals, which means it's worth jotting down some initial ideas for each mode of persuasion. Again, in this preparatory stage, your writing is likely to be informal.

Logos: I need to figure out a way to show that this is a good bottom-line decision. College administrators want their students to be successful and giving students more money for college takes pressure off them. Students won't have to work as much, or appeal to family members, etc., so they can concentrate on completing their degrees. Maybe I could also find some statistics showing that first-generation students who are well supported by their universities tend to be especially generous alumni.

Pathos: I'm going back to the guy who sits next to me in class. A good guy—funny, smart. No doubt he can be successful. Maybe if I paint a picture of what his life—or the life of someone like him—would be if he didn't go to college, it could be pretty moving. Some emotional photos or illustrations might also help make my point.

Ethos: Because I'm not a first-generation college student myself, I should have a pretty easy time proving I'm a credible speaker. While I seem to be arguing against my own best interests, I'm doing so because I think first-generation students bring an energy and enthusiasm to the campus that make all of us better students. I'll also be appealing to my reader's credibility because college administrators, like most people, want to be thought of as generous and fair-minded.

Again, it's the rare essay that will have an entirely balanced use of all three of the modes of persuasion. However, the simple act of writing out potential arguments in each category will help significantly as you move toward crafting a thesis and outlining your essay.

Finally, as you deliberate about which appeal will best suit your prompt, don't forget your other, underlying, audience: your instructor who assigned and will grade your essay. Having listened to them in class, what do you think your professor values? Do they emphasize logical thinking? Do they seem particularly moved by the problems of the under-served? Yes, your essay is part of an ongoing conversation on an important topic, but you also have pragmatic reasons for writing it. Like an advertising firm designing a marketing campaign, your first pitch isn't really to the customer (your essay's imaginary audience) but to the company executive (your professor) who can either green-light your proposal—or put the kibosh on it.

Timesaver Tip: Always write to your audience. The sooner you can identify and begin analyzing your audience, the quicker you can narrow the focus of your essay, and the less likely you will generate material that you don't end up using.

DISCUSSION

It's beneficial to discuss your essay throughout the writing process. You will probably want to talk about the essay prompt with your instructor or classmates before you've written a word. Then, whether you are prewriting, drafting, or revising, you'll find that even a short verbal exchange with another person can be helpful. Indeed, one of the core principles of

the National Council of Teachers of English is that "writing benefits from talking."

Here are some of the most common "discussion venues" in a writing class for generating essay ideas and some suggestions for approaching them productively.

In-Class Small Group

We'll spend more time talking about peer-group discussion in the section on revision in Chapter 9. Nevertheless, while in-class small groups tend to focus on completed essay drafts, you can also get a great deal of help in the early stages of planning your essay. Classmates are able to exchange ideas in a low-risk, informal setting. You can ask questions and make comments that you might not feel comfortable trying out in front of the entire class.

If you were discussing our proposed essay on first-generation college students, for instance, you might ask how many in the group fit that description. Just hearing their stories would make for potentially strong essay material. You could also compare and contrast the challenges faced by first-generation students with those encountered by students whose parents went to college. There's a lot of valuable information to be culled from a small group, if you only take the initiative to reveal and gather it.

Finally, wherever you stand on a topic—even if you completely disagree with a classmate—listen and take notes. You never know when they may come in handy.

Full-Class

Writing professor John Ruszkiewicz acknowledges that professors, just like their counterparts in business, "admire well-prepared people who can handle themselves in public with skill and grace." One of the best ways to do this, Ruszkiewicz argues, is to let others speak first, to listen carefully to their discussion, and then to "become a connector in the group, someone who occasionally summarizes the direction of the discussion and then pushes it forward."

If you have an opinion on a topic and feel strongly enough to launch it into a full-class discussion, you are likely to receive opinions that both confirm and counter your beliefs. Go into these discussions with an open mind. It's much better to change your opinion early in the composition process and write a strong paper than to stick doggedly to a weak position just because it was the first one that occurred to you.

Again, listen and take notes. Even if the class discussion veers away from

your topic, you may still get general ideas for your essay. And, of course, you can always raise your hand and steer the dialogue back toward the subject of your essay.

Informal Out-of-Class

Conversations about your essay that take place outside of class are likely to be mixed in with talk about any number of other subjects. Nevertheless, the casualness of chatting with a friend allows you to approach your topic from an unconventional, adversarial, or even comic perspective. This is a time for thinking outside the box and allowing your imagination free rein.

Unfortunately, it's easy to forget a good idea you hear in the middle of a long confab with a friend. Therefore, because good ideas are rarer than we would like them to be, it's worth pausing for a minute, taking out your notebook or your phone, and making sure that good idea isn't lost forever.

Online

With the increasing number of college classes offered online and as hybrids (part online, part face-to-face), chances are that at some point during your higher education you will be discussing classwork in a virtual environment. In an online or hybrid class, participation in discussion forums will probably be part of your class grade, so you already have an incentive to offer up your best ideas clearly and persuasively.

An even stronger incentive to participate in and monitor these virtual chats is the commentary being generated on the subject of your essay. Entering a good discussion forum is like entering a room with a lively and entertaining conversation going on: it makes you want to hang around and listen.

As you discuss issues online, you'll want to follow a few basic guidelines:

- Be prepared.
- Be polite.
- Stay on topic.
- Use concrete evidence to support your points.
- Proofread your comments at least once before posting them.

Obviously, if you borrow a specific idea from a classmate, you will want to acknowledge that fact in your essay. More frequently, though, the energy of a vigorous dialogue will inspire your own thinking to move in directions you hadn't anticipated.

Timesaver Tip: Visit your campus writing center. Most colleges and universities have writing centers, places on campus where you can meet with a tutor to talk about your writing. One of the best investments of your time—wherever you are in the writing process—is to talk over your paper with an experienced writing tutor.

Find out where your writing center is, when it's open, and whether you need to make an appointment in advance. Then take advantage of this invaluable resource throughout your college career.

SOONER RATHER THAN LATER

In his article "The Importance of Writing Badly," professor Bruce Ballenger remarks, "When I give my students permission to write badly, to suspend their compulsive need to find the 'perfect way of saying it,' often something miraculous happens: Words that used to trickle forth come gushing to the page." Author Allegra Goodman makes a similar point: "Writer, beware! The inner critic is insidious, subversive, always available for depressive episodes. Stay alert. Know the enemy. Know yourself."

Both Ballenger and Goodman want us to know that when we begin turning ideas into text, we need to give ourselves a break. Rather than expecting perfection from our first attempt at an assignment, we should anticipate more than a little chaos. It's a fact: the early stages of writing are often quite messy. However, *don't give up.* You'll be surprised how helpful it is to take a short break before coming back to your writing. You didn't realize it, but while you were exercising or eating or watching TV, your brain was working on a solution to the problem.

The key, though, is giving yourself plenty of time to make mistakes, to take risks and fail. Occasionally your argument will arrive in a very coherent form, seemingly out of nowhere. More often, you'll spend a good deal of your writing time coming up with ideas and sentences and paragraphs and even entire pages that you ultimately reject.

As I've already noted, good academic writing tends to be the result of a recursive and discontinuous process. We start, we stop, we repeat, we delete. We get up, we sit down. Even when we've chained ourselves to our writing desks, writers are often thinking about something other than the text they are creating.

Ultimately, it's helpful to know your own habits as a writer. This is important because, like good reading, good writing generally takes time. Just because in the past you've always waited until the night before an essay is due to start writing, that doesn't mean it's the best way to proceed.

If you play a musical instrument, imagine how hard it would be to get up on stage and play a difficult piece with practically no rehearsal. You'd feel embarrassed to stand there fumbling your way from one note or chord to the next. Sure, if your audience was sympathetic, like many high-school teachers are—at least you showed up and gave it a try!—you might "pass" your audition. But college instructors tend to be less sympathetic to the simple act of making an effort: they want to see you actually *succeed*.

Consequently, it's best to begin the early stages of writing as soon as you receive your assignment. Put those first thoughts down on paper or in a digital document *now*. Getting to know your topic from a number of different perspectives, even if you only end up pursuing one, will make you a more authoritative and confident writer.

Timesaver Tip: Take advantage of small blocks of time. Many students tell themselves they need long blocks of continuous free time to compose a good essay, but think how much writing you already get done in the few minutes of downtime between one engagement and another: texting, emailing, posting to social media. Setting aside serious writing time is always a good idea, but if you have a deadline looming and a number of other commitments, try making a list at lunch, or do some clustering between classes. The early stages of the writing process can often be completed in short, discrete stretches of time. Even doing a little research on your phone while you're sitting on the bus might result in the topic for one of your paragraphs.

Working Alone

1. Once you know the prompt for your essay, try one of the invention activities described above (pp. 55–60) and see what you come up with.
2. Choose a second, very different, invention activity for turning ideas into text and see if that's more, or less, useful than the first activity.
3. Using a daily planner, or a calendar, or just a blank document, sketch out a timeline for completing your essay. Be realistic. Allow for assignments in other classes as well as work, family obligations, and at least a bit of fun.
4. At home, start a journal, whether it's a leather-bound volume, a spiral notebook, or simply a file on your computer. Feel free to jot down random ideas, but keep turning your focus back to your essay assignment. When you've filled up some pages, highlight those ideas that are most likely to help with the composition of your essay, then return to

your journal whenever you're short of material. And keep journaling throughout the writing process. You never know when a stray thought will become the basis for a solid paragraph.

Working with Others

1. Pair up with another student and have them describe the essay they are working on. Then head to your phone or computer and do some lightning research on *your partner's topic*. After about 10 minutes, let each other know what you found.
2. Ask your partner the journalist's questions—*Who? What? How? When? Where? Why?*—to discover more about their essay topic. Some of your questions may elicit obvious or less-than-useful answers, but when you hit upon a vein of worthwhile questioning, make sure you both take notes so that the writer can use that material to improve their paper. Be sure both writers take their turns as questioner and respondent.
3. Still working with the same partner, consider how Aristotle's "three appeals" apply to your essay topics. How will you appeal to your readers' sense of *logos*, or reason; *pathos*, or emotion; and *ethos*, or author/reader credibility?
4. Working now with a different partner, describe the essay you are planning to write. What about the topic do you find most exciting? Where do you expect to be most challenged? Record the conversation using the voice memo app on your phone or a digital recording tool on your computer. (Listen to the recording before you begin your next round of drafting so that you can remember what you like about your topic and where you'll need to spend extra time drafting.)