Strategy #3 Writing – Brainstorming

Most of you are very familiar with graphic organizers, and I will provide tips for using them in future strategy posts. For my first writing strategy, though, I decided to focus on brainstorming – the art of writing down your thoughts first and organizing them later. Graphic organizers are much more common now because many students struggle with brainstorming, but I believe brainstorming has its place, and does not deserve to become a lost art!

How to Brainstorm Successfully

* Be sure to start with a fresh piece of paper or a blank Word document! You need plenty of space to write or type all the thoughts that come into your head about a topic!
* Write or type whatever you can think of that relates to your topic- words, phrases, sentences, whatever – form does not matter!
* As long as you can read it and it is not something you plan to turn in, neatness doesn’t matter either!
* You can brainstorm both creative writing and research papers. You can also brainstorm research papers both before and after doing your research – brainstorm before researching so you can figure out just what you need to research. Brainstorm after you research by taking the best of your notes and quotes and putting them with your other ideas – just remember to write notes in your own words and properly copy and cite the quotes!
* If you are given a graphic organizer, an outline, or any other specific directions for organizing your writing, that doesn’t mean you can’t brainstorm! Brainstorm first, then transfer your ideas to the correct places in whatever organizational method you are expected to use! Getting down some random ideas first might keep you from being overwhelmed at the beginning of an assignment.
* Whether you are going from brainstorming directly to writing or organizing your thoughts between brainstorming and writing, don’t forget to cross anything you’ve decided to use off your brainstorming list, so you don’t repeat yourself. Read through your list as many times as it takes to make sure you’ve used everything you want to use, and remember – you might not use everything! One of the best things about brainstorming is that it gives you a place to start, without the pressure of needing to finish! That’s what formal organizing and actual writing is for!