

Clustering

Clustering can be used to find topics and to organize thoughts. This technique can be used for any kind of writing. A general topic is needed in order to start the clustering process.

The process consists of three steps:

1. Place the general topic in a circle in the center of the page.
2. Place three to four circled subtopics (related ideas, questions, or topics) around the general topic.
3. Surround each circled subtopic with related ideas, facts, details, or examples. These do not need to be in sentence form—just use words or phrases. Continue doing this for ten to twenty minutes or for as long as the ideas flow.
4. One of the subtopics with its additional information can now be used as the focus of a paper, report, or speech.

The following is an example of clustering with “college” as the general topic. Note the circled subtopics (housing, cost, raising money, choice of school) and their related ideas, facts, details and examples.

