

Whip Up a Storm of Writing Ideas

Have you ever stared at a blank white page and not known how to begin writing? You probably needed to brainstorm in order to get going. Brainstorming is a way of coming up with lots of ideas before you put pen to paper. It makes writing — a paragraph, an essay, a memo, a report for work — much easier. Suppose you had to write an essay on the effects of TV on children. Here's how to do it, in four steps:

1. Write the topic at the top of a blank page.
2. List every idea about the topic that comes to mind, in whatever order the ideas occur to you, and no matter how silly an idea may seem.
3. Group similar ideas together.
4. Get rid of any idea that doesn't fit into one of your groups.

Reread the brainstormed notes and then rewrite them below, grouping the brainstormed list under the headings "helpful" and "harmful." By putting brainstormed ideas that "go together" in the same group, you're organizing your thoughts so you can write them up clearly.

Here's a sample on the notepad of brainstormed ideas for an essay:

TV is Both Helpful and Harmful to Children

learn ABC's

good entertainment

kids not relating to kids

Pesame Street is terrific

keeps kids from homework

kids not active and playing outside

not using your imagination

"travel" to other places and see new things

no exercise so get fat and eat junk food

fun programs

too much violence

lots of swear words ###@#@@!!!


brings family together

Great nature shows

too much advertising

great baby-sitter for mom

learn their numbers



No need to brainstorm in sentences. Just jot down notes, even notes of one word.

TV helpful:

TV harmful:

Which brainstormed note doesn't fit either group?

Now you're ready to write an outline for a GED-type essay on the effects of TV on children!

Your Turn:

TOPIC: IF I HAD MAGIC POWERS TO CHANGE MY WORLD, I WOULD....

List every idea you can think of to fit the topic. (**HINT:** brainstorm ideas for yourself, for your neighborhood, and for the entire planet, and write them below.)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Reread your brainstormed notes and group the ideas that “go together.” Then write a short heading for each group (see HINT above):

group heading #1: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

group heading #2: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

group heading #3: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Finally, cross out any idea you’ve brainstormed that doesn’t fit into one of your groups.

If you were asked to write an article or essay on **If I Had Magic Powers to Change My World, I Would....**, you would no longer be chewing the end of your pencil wondering how to begin. You’ve brainstormed lots of ideas. Your group headings can be turned into the first sentence of your paragraph. The ideas listed under each heading can provide the supporting detail for the paragraphs. You’re all set to begin writing an outline and then an essay!

Turn your brainstorm into an outline, and your outline into a GED essay.

Answers: TV help! learn ABC's; fun programs; good entertainment; Sesame Street; great nature shows; learn their numbers; "travel" to other places & see new things; brings family together. **TV harm!** too much violence; lots of swear words; keeps kids from homework; kids not active & playing outside; kids not relating to other kids; not using their imagination; no exercise so get fat & eat junk food; too much advertising. **The idea that doesn't fit:** great baby-sitter for Mom (because the idea centers on adults rather than children)

Your Turn (possible answers): group heading #1 — personal life: 1) get divorced, 2) lose weight, 3) make lots of money, 4) work only 3 days a week, 5) go to college full-time, 6) have green eyes, 7) become an artist, 8) travel to other countries, 9) stop smoking, 10) speak Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic fluently. **group heading #2 — neighborhood/community:** 1) extend library hours, 2) get a new school principal, 3) eliminate racism, 4) plant trees and flowers everywhere, 5) have daily garbage pick-ups, 6) get help for substance abusers, 7) build a teen center, 8) start a community choir, 9) erase all the graffiti, 10) set up a daycare center for kids and elders. **group heading #3 — world/planet/universe:** 1) make politicians listen to the people, 2) eliminate hunger, 3) protect the environment, 4) bring world peace, 5) have everyone learn 5 languages, 6) bring enemies together to sing, 7) fill every heart with love, 8) provide universal medical care, 9) give everyone a home, 10) teach every person to read and write