How to Get Started on Getting Started

Video Transcript

Getting started on a project is usually pretty easy if you already have an idea of what you want to do. But without that original idea to build off of, how do you know what first step to take? While banging your head against a wall is a solution often talked about but rarely used, this obviously isn’t the best way to move a project forward. Instead of head-banging, consider brainstorming. Brainstorming is sort of a catch-all term for various techniques that are designed to jumpstart your thought process, unlock your creative potential and allow you to pull together ideas that you can use as the basis for a project.

Brainstorming is a strategy often used in group settings to enable group members to introduce, react to, and revise ideas. “Try this.” “What about if we did that?” Particularly effective in problem-solving situations, brainstorming allows for multiple perspectives and ideas to be considered. Brainstorming in writing follows a similar path, although the ideas put forth are all your own. This allows you to get ideas for what you want to write out of your head so that you can consider the direction you want to take your essay. Generally speaking, brainstorming techniques use word association or topical questions to help focus your mind on various specific aspects of a given subject, or even to find a subject to start with.

It is important to note that the goal of brainstorming is not to develop a final version of a project, but simply to help you move forward with discovering the ideas you want to use to get started. While this can be a useful tool, it is also limited. Brainstorming is most successful when you are able to tune-out your inner critic and instead listen clearly to your unique creative voice. You should never let the fear of failure keep you from trying something, but it is especially important that you allow yourself the freedom to create when you are looking for that great idea that will get your project going. With brainstorming, the goal is quantity not
quality of ideas. Once you begin writing, you can winnow out the ideas with less merit. The brainstorming session itself, though, is a "no judgment" zone.

What are some ways you have discovered ideas? Were you able to find them with ease, or did you have difficulty? Do you think that brainstorming will help you get started on a project?

About this transcript:

- Transcript title: How to Get Started on Getting Started
- Corresponding Lesson: LACO_007 Brainstorming
- Author and curator: Matt Huigens MFA for The TEL Library.
- Creative Commons License: CC BY NC SA