

Guide to brainstorming and initial planning.

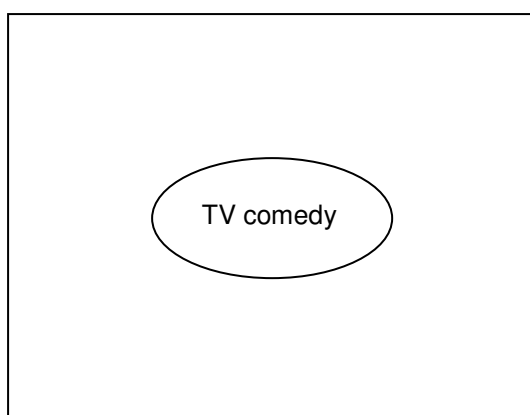
Brainstorming ideas

Before you draft your initial plan to complete your assignment, you need to generate ideas about your topic and identify areas that you need to research.

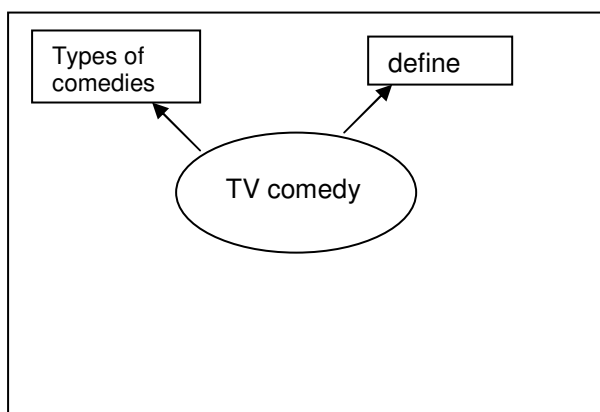
- First write down everything that you already know about the topic. Think about what has been discussed in your lectures, in class or in your reading. Try to stay on the general essay topic but write as much as possible. You can delete irrelevant ideas later when you cluster the material.
- Look at your assignment question and identify the gaps between what you need to know and what you already know. Write this down even if it seems vague, e.g. 'evidence for...!'.
- Next organise your ideas and notes into sub-headings or clusters of ideas.

You may find it useful to draw a diagram, and the process of brainstorming and clustering ideas can also be called mind-mapping, using a spider diagram or pattern note-making.

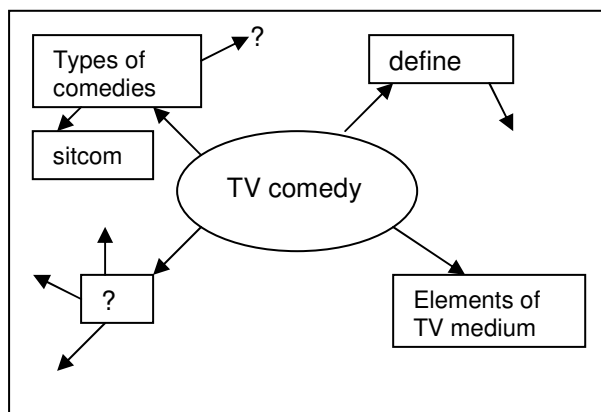
- Draw a circle on a blank page and write the topic of your assignment in the circle. This is the core of your assignment.



- Next, write all the ideas you have about the core topic around the circle. Draw a circle or box around each one.



- Keep adding ideas, questions or associated topics in boxes around the ideas on your page.



- What areas do you need to research? How can you get a quick overview of the topic? Where will you find in-depth research material?
- Use this diagram as a way to sort out connections between the ideas, areas that you need to research and as a basis for your initial essay writing plan.

Your initial plan

Now that you have worked out what research you need to do, work out a timeline for your reading and note-taking. Use the suggested timeline on the Assignment Survival Kit or the time suggested by your tutor to work out when your initial reading and note-taking should be finished.

- Allocate your time so that you know which days you have for research or reading.
- Stick to your plan.
- While you are taking notes, remember to write down exactly where you found the material. You will need this information when you acknowledge your sources and when writing your reference list. It is useful to know which referencing style you will be using but if you are not sure yet, make sure that you record the information that you will need later. **You must record:**
 - § The type of source: is it a book, journal, website etc.
 - § For books: author, date of publication, publisher and place.
 - § For journals: author, title of journal and article, date, any other volume or issue details.
 - § For websites: author, date updated, date accessed, URL, publisher (some of this information is not readily available. For more information see a good referencing guide or the Academic Integrity website at www.kent.ac.uk/uelt/ai).