# Brainstorming and Outlining

# Important Notice:

At the end of this presentation there is a link to a google form quiz. You must score an 80% or higher to pass the quiz.

Please take your time viewing and studying this material before you proceed with the quiz.

# Objectives

In this module, students will:

- Discover brainstorming techniques

- Learn how to use brainstorming techniques

- Use brainstorming techniques to identify logical thought patterns when writing essays

- Assess the purpose and structure of an outline

# Too Many Ideas?

Too many ideas about a topic can create confusion. If you are overwhelmed, follow these steps:

- Write your ideas down.

- Arrange and organize ideas by main points.

- Evaluate your ideas. Are they cohesive? Do they serve the purpose of your topic?

- Narrow them down. Choose the most important or best developed thoughts.

# Is Your Mind Drawing a Blank?

If you're experiencing "writer's block":

- Research the topic.

- Write down recurrent ideas or themes.

- Pick a focus or main idea and explore it in depth.

- Use a brainstorming technique to organize the topics and develop an outline.
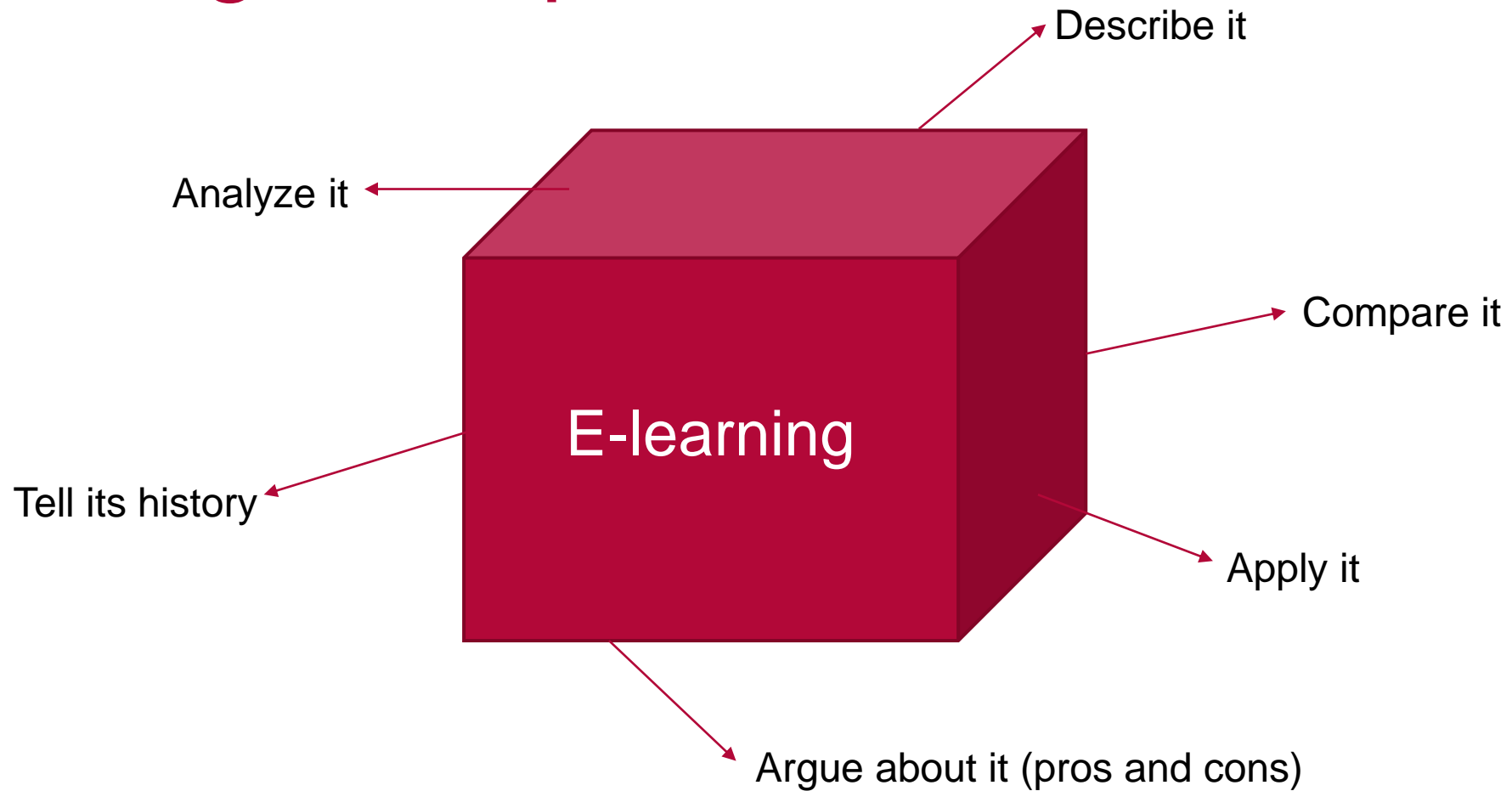
# Brainstorming Techniques

Brainstorming is an important part of the prewriting phase. Each technique helps organize and focus ideas in different ways. Some of them include:

- Cubing

- Cluster

- Freewriting

- Nut-shelling

- 5 W's and 1 H

# Cubing

- The cubing strategy encourages writers to look at a topic from six different perspectives or approaches.

- While you do not necessarily have to choose six different sides, it is a great exercise to look at a topic from different angles.

- You may decide to use a few approaches or fully develop just one.

- When evaluating different angles, you will have to research the topic in depth. This will also help you when writing the developmental paragraphs.
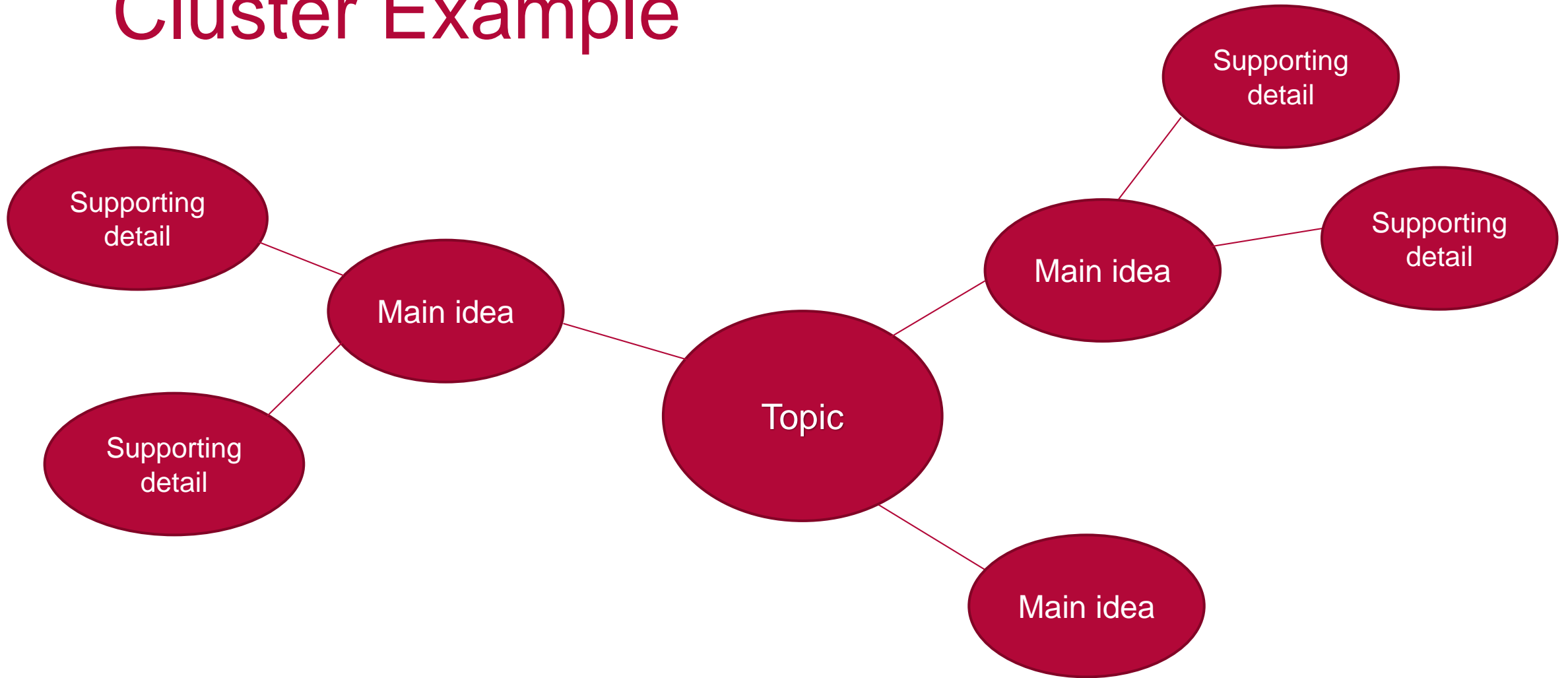
# Cubing Example



Describe it

Analyze it

Compare it

E-learning

Tell its history

Apply it

Argue about it (pros and cons)

# Cluster

- This technique can turn a web of ideas into an organized plan.

- How do you cluster?
  - Start by writing down any word or phrase related to the topic.
  - Then, select the ones that follow the direction or approach you want to take.
  - Lastly, organize your ideas by recurrent themes.

- A cluster can serve as a basis for an essay outline.

# Cluster Example

# Freewriting

- Set a timeframe (15, 20, 30 minutes)

- Write down your thoughts freely. Do not focus on grammar or style.

- When the time is up, evaluate what you wrote.
  - What are the best ideas?
  - What themes can be developed?
  - What thoughts do not fit well into the topic?

- Do not stop there! Take your main ideas and develop an outline.

# Freewriting Example

Topic: Dogs vs Cats

"Dogs are better pets than cats, that is why they are called 'man's best friend'. Dogs are more cuddly and cats are usually solitary. You can play more games with a dog than a cat. Cats are usually indifferent to humans so they tend to do their own thing. Dogs can sense humans' emotions and can try to help comfort you"

Freewriting encourages you to write anything that comes to your mind. Ignore spelling and grammar mistakes.

After you have written down everything, look for main ideas and approaches. What kind of essay can you write with this information? What details will you need to support your claim?

# Freewriting Example

Fix errors:
"cuddlier"

Take out anything that doesn't fit the main theme.

"Dogs are better pets than cats, that is why they are called 'man's best friend'. Dogs are more cuddly and ~~cats are usually solitary~~. You can play more games with a dog than a cat. Cats are usually indifferent to humans so they tend to do their own thing. <u>Dogs can sense humans' emotions and can try to help comfort you.</u>"

This sentence could be developed into a paragraph if supporting evidence is found.

# Nut-shelling

- In two or three sentences, explain what you are going to write about.

- These sentences should only contain the most important information about a topic.

- Each sentence should represent a main idea to develop in you essay.

- Nut-shelling can also help you write thesis statements and topic sentences.

# Nut-shelling Example

Topic: Standardized Testing

Nut-shelling: "I want to show how standardized tests do not accurately measure students' understanding or knowledge. A high score on a test can only measure memorization or limited application."

What main ideas can you extract from the previous sentences?
- Testing
- Measuring
- Knowledge
- Results

Use those ideas or topics to develop an outline. The nutshell sentences can also be turned into a thesis statement.

# 5 W's and 1 H

- The journalistic questions (why?, who?, what?, when?, where?, and how?) will help you gather essential information about a topic.

- Although you might not be able to answer every question, they will help focus on the most important information.

- The questions with the most information will help you decide the kind of essay you should write.

# 5 W's and 1 H Example

Topic: Primary Election Chaos

What?: Primary elections were partially suspended

Why?: Primary ballots were not delivered to electoral colleges on time

Who?: State Elections Commission and main party presidents

When?: August 9, 2020

Where?: Electoral colleges throughout the island of Puerto Rico

How?: Main party presidents decided to postpone primaries in electoral colleges that had not received ballots.

# Brainstorming

All of these techniques have a common goal: to identify main topics and recurrent themes.

Regardless of which one you use, be conscious of the purpose of your essay. Each technique will help you focus your ideas and develop a coherent and logical essay.

After you have brainstormed, take those ideas and build an organized outline.

# Outlining

- Provides a well-structured plan for your essay.

- Establishes coherency and a logical flow of ideas.

- Sets boundaries for the scope of your essay. When looking for supporting details, the outline serves as a guide for what fits into the topic and what does not.

- Organizes ideas hierarchically in order to identify themes and patterns.

# Outline Example

I. Introduction

Topic: Distance learning

Thesis statement: Distance learning has both positive and negative effects on students.

II. Development

First paragraph

Main idea: Negative effects

Topic sentence: Distance learning has limited interaction.

Supporting details: studies, statistics, quotes

Second paragraph

Main idea: Positive effects

Topic sentence: Distance learning provides flexibility.

Supporting details: studies, statistics, quotes

III. Conclusion

Restate main ideas: Distance learning is flexible, but limits interactions.

Final comment: When considering distance learning, one must evaluate its pros and cons.

# Outline Template

Use this outline template to organize the main ideas of your essay:

Outline template

Para finalizar, haga clic sobre el enlace para tomar la prueba y enviar el informe a su profesor(a):

https://forms.gle/Jv3Ciw1oVvMQK1Ff9

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