# **Getting Started | QC Writing Center**

## You’ve gotten an assignment. *Now what!?* Worry not, we have some tips to get you going:

* + **Annotate your prompt**. Highlight, underline, circle, and otherwise mark up your prompt. Pay special attention to the imperative verbs: an assignment which asks you to *analyze cause and effect* is different than an assignment which asks you to *compare and contrast*.
  + **Ask questions**. What’s the purpose of this writing? Who is the intended audience? The who/what/where/when/why/how? You can always seek and discuss the answers to these questions with a peer.
  + **Brainstorm.** For many writers, brainstorming looks like generating a bullet-point **list** or a diagram, such as an **idea map**. How you sequence your ideas comes later; right now, just worry about getting your ideas onto the page, however they show up. This can mean brainstorming in a language other than English or in a medium other than words (such as pictures or voice memos)!
  + **Write a thesis.** A working thesis can help you build out your supporting ideas, arguments, counterarguments, etc. You’re not bound to this thesis; you can always modify it later!
  + **Freewrite.** That’s right: just start writing! Don’t inhibit or censor yourself at this stage. If it’s helpful, think of this draft as one for you and you alone.
  + **Outline.** Outlining isn’t for everyone, nor is it for every assignment. However, it can be tremendously helpful for organizing your ideas and research, especially if they feel overwhelming. Remember that, like anything else, outlining takes practice.
  + **Write the easy part(s) first**. In other words, what do you already know you want to include in your essay? Start there, even if it’s not at the beginning.

**More tips!**

* What tools do you need? Your assignment might require some reading and/or research before you can begin. It’s possible you’ll need to consult some example essays before you can develop your own. Perhaps you’d benefit from talking things over with someone at the Writing Center. Maybe it’s all the above! Knowing where you need support can make getting started much simpler.
* How are you feeling? Anxiety and writer’s block are just some of what can keep us from writing. Check in with yourself. Try recording what you understand v. what you don’t understand yet, or what you feel confident in v. what you don’t feel confident in yet. Again, identifying where you might need support can help you get started.
* Where and how are you writing? Some writers prefer listening to music when drafting, others don’t. Some writers prefer drafting by hand, others don’t. You get where we’re going with this: if where and how you’re trying to write isn’t fruitful, try changing it up. Something as simple as switching from your room to the library could make a big difference.