



Prewriting Activities

What to do: Use these warmups with students when you start a writing activity. Provide sample texts to give students a model for writing, inspiration for creativity, and motivation to do their best work. These activities can be done individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole group depending on the writing task and time allotted.

Why it matters: Prewriting activities generate questions and ideas that will help students begin. They also help students organize their thoughts and produce more focused writing.

Activity	Description	Sample texts or resources to use
Alphabet Book or Picture Dictionary	Write the letters of the alphabet, A through Z, each on a page of a booklet to create an alphabet book or picture dictionary. For an alphabet book, students can list words that start with the letter on the page. For a picture dictionary, students can draw and label pictures that start with the letter on the page.	
Choosing Sides	Pick an issue or current event and write a strong statement that will generate differing opinions (e.g., "Pizza is better than hamburgers"). Under the statement, draw a horizontal line designating "Agree" at one end and "Disagree" at the other end. Have students check or put an X somewhere on the line to show the strength and position of their opinion, and have them note a reason under it. After discussing student opinions, read a text about the issue and see if students' thinking changes.	
What's Your Opinion?	Write an interesting yes/no or multiple-choice question (e.g., "Do dogs make better pets than cats, hamsters, or birds?"). Make a chart for students to mark their votes. Gather results and help students express their opinions and listen to opinions that differ. Staff may also want to lead students in creating a graph to represent the data they collect.	
Brainstorm Web	Invite students to create a giant web of ideas, using a starter word in the middle of a piece of paper. Add to the web by connecting one thought or idea to another. Each addition is one word, in a circle, with a line to the connecting word or idea, whether the original or another addition. Have students share their thinking as they build the web and connect ideas.	



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Venn Diagram	Challenge students to find similarities and differences in three objects, topics, or places. Draw three large intersecting circles, two on top, one on the bottom. Where circles overlap, list commonalities. Where there is no overlap, list unique features. The goal is to get at least one commonality in the center and at least two in each of the three other overlapping areas.	
Group Poem	Inspire students to write poetry. Start with a sentence or phrase, explaining that it's the first line of the poem. Everyone will add a line or two, building off the previous line. Students will collaborate, using descriptive language and poetic elements.	
Get the Facts!	Ask students to research local and national news stories or reference sources to gather information about a particular person, issue, topic, or event. Have them answer the questions of who, what, where, why, when, and how on sticky notes to create a fact chart.	
Letter to the Editor	Have students work together to write a letter to the editor. Outline the basic parts of the letter and generate topics to write about. Have students vote on a topic to address. Start with a sentence or phrase, explaining that it's the first line of the letter. Everyone will add a line or two, building off the line before. Students will collaborate, using persuasive language.	
Storyboard	Provide each student with a storyboard outline (e.g., three squares, six squares, or eight squares). Each square will represent a scene or phase of their story. Have the students illustrate and write a description for each square.	
Story Starter	Write the first line of a story (e.g., "Once upon a time, there lived a handsome frog ..."). For ideas, go to http://thestorystarter.com). Everyone will add a line or two, building off the line before. Students will collaborate using transition words, plot elements, and figurative language. The final story should have a beginning, middle, and end.	

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