Organizing Information V: Mapping

Students sometimes feel overwhelmed by the large amount of new information presented in their classrooms and textbooks.

- The first step in handling a large amount of information is to reduce the material to its most important parts, by deciding what is important, less important, and unimportant.
- The second step is to organize the important information so that it is easy to study.

  - For help with the first step, see Organizing Information I – III.
  - For help with the second step, see Organizing Information IV – VI.

What is Mapping?

Mapping is a way to visually represent how a topic and its related ideas are connected. Different types of maps or diagrams can graphically organize information in different ways. Below are some different types of maps.

- **Conceptual Maps**

  A conceptual map is a diagram that shows graphically how ideas are related. The following steps are used to create a conceptual map:
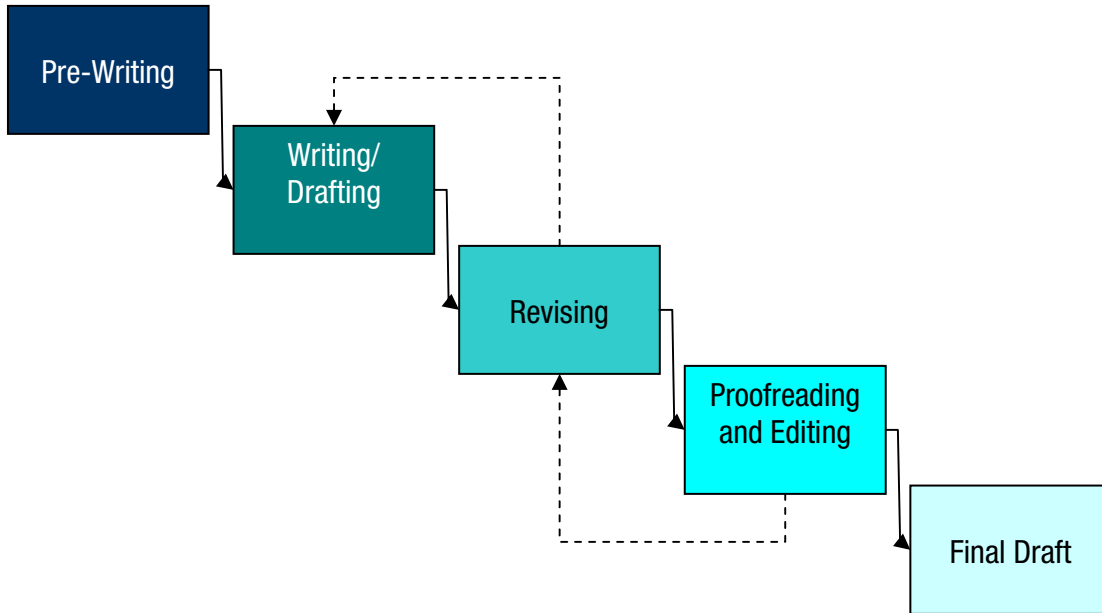
  1. Identify the topic and write it in the center of the page.
  2. Identify ideas, aspects, parts, and definitions that are related to the topic. Write them around the main idea and connect them to it by drawing lines.
  3. Write specific supporting details and related ideas around the parts identified in step 2, and draw lines connecting them to the related part or parts.

  Here is an example of a simple conceptual map:
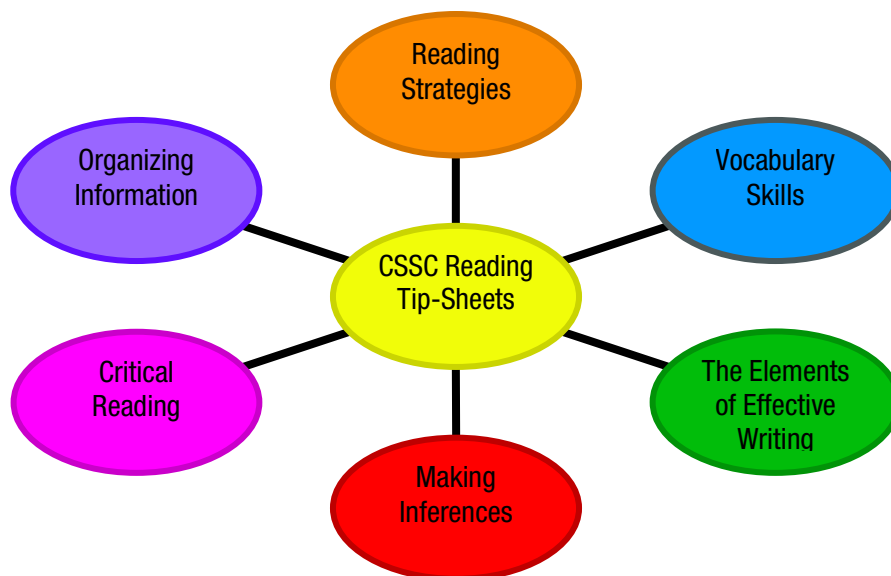
- **Process Diagrams**

    A process diagram graphically depicts the steps or parts of a process, and how they relate to each other. The following diagram shows the steps in the writing process.

```
┌─────────────┐
│ Pre-Writing │
└─────────────┘
      ┌─────────────┐
      │  Writing/   │
      │  Drafting   │
      └─────────────┘
            ┌─────────────┐
            │  Revising   │
            └─────────────┘
                  ┌─────────────────┐
                  │  Proofreading   │
                  │   and Editing   │
                  └─────────────────┘
                        ┌─────────────┐
                        │ Final Draft │
                        └─────────────┘
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- **Other Types of Maps**

    Other types of maps include timelines, where the sequence or historical order of events is drawn along a straight line labeled with dates and descriptions, and part and function diagrams, where illustrations of physical objects (such as a computer or your brain) have labels indicating the different parts of the object.

Try using mapping to study for tests, to clarify your ideas, and for other things like brainstorming for essay and creative writing.