

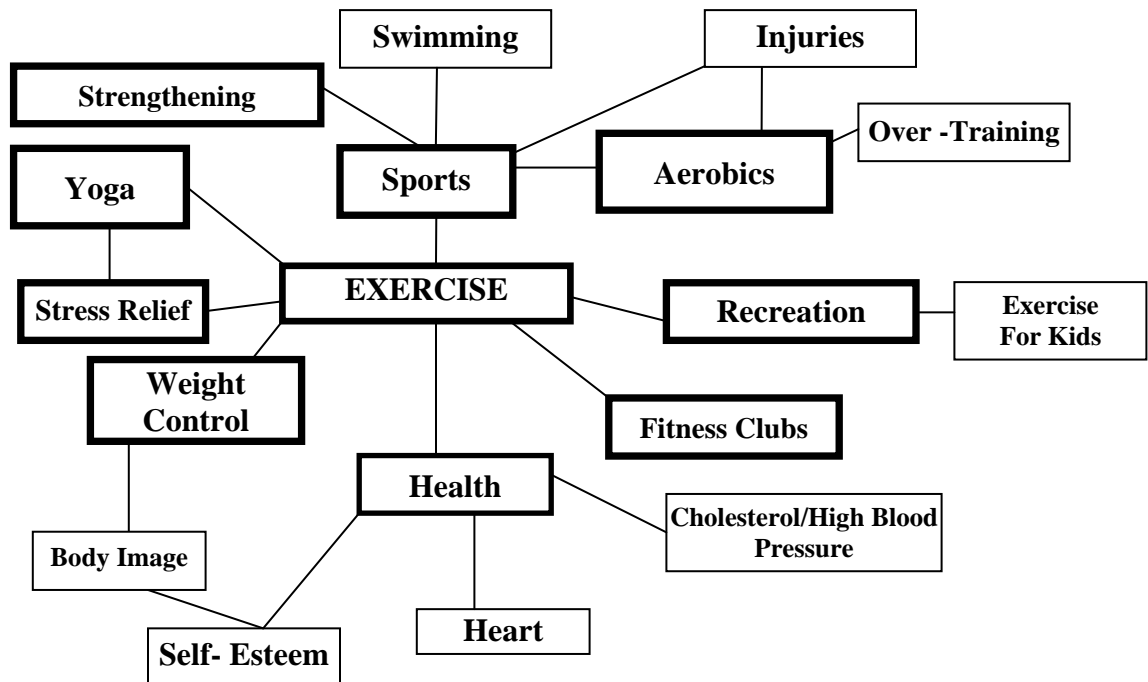
Prewriting Strategies

Choosing a Topic

When choosing a topic for a paper, you need to make certain that the topic is appropriately narrow, so you will be able to address it fully in the space of your paper. A good way to begin is to brainstorm, allowing yourself to free-associate ideas. Then, look at what ideas you have generated, and choose the aspects of your topic that interest you most and seem to work best together.

Suppose you are assigned to write a paper about exercise for your physiology class. You must narrow this broad topic by deciding which aspects of exercise you will investigate. Try brainstorming, clustering, or webbing to see what issues relate to exercise.

Clustering



Continued on reverse side

Thesis Statement

Once you have completed the research that allows you to hypothesize what the health benefits of exercise are, generate a clear thesis statement. Your thesis should succinctly put forth the argument that you wish to prove.

Thesis: Regular aerobic exercise such as jogging or biking has been shown to prevent illness and improve self-esteem in formerly sedentary people.

Outline

Next, use your thesis to make an outline. The outline is similar to an architect's blueprint – you build your paper based on the sketch you have laid out in your outline.

First, put the thesis at the top of the page to keep you focused on your topic. A good thesis will suggest the organization of the paper: the thesis above shows that you first need to discuss how exercise prevents illness, and second, how it boosts self-esteem. Now you must ask, "What information will I use to back up my argument?" In your outline, divide your ideas into component parts. An outline ensures that your paper will present your argument logically and will help you avoid digressing.

Regular aerobic exercise such as jogging or biking has been shown to prevent illness and improve self-esteem in formerly sedentary people.

- I. Introduction (give background, introduce your thesis)
 - A. Exercise has been recognized as a useful tool in preventative medicine
 - B. Increases pressure on people to be fit as well as thin
 - C. Thesis statement
- II. Exercise effects prevent illness
 - A. regular exercise improves resistance to common illnesses, such as colds, flu
 - B. by lowering cholesterol and body fat, exercise decreases likelihood of heart disease, cancer, and stroke
- III. Exercise boosts self-esteem
 - A. lower body weight, improved muscle tone improves self-image
 - B. chemicals called endorphins cause a natural "high," improving mood and outlook
- IV. Conclusion
 - A. Briefly sum up your discussion; tell the reader what she/he has learned reading your paper

You can now see how your paper will be organized, which ideas you will discuss, and in what order you will treat them.