

Ideas and Research

Content

- Brainstorm To Get Other Folks' Ideas.....2
- Collect Ideas.....3
- Use Childhood Memories.....3
- Make a List.....4
- Listen.....4
- Analyze Data.....4
- Read. Read. Read.....5
- Watch TV or Movies.....5
- Play The Alphabet Game.....5
- Look Around.....6
- Use the Internet.....6
- Visit the Library.....7
- Conduct Interviews.....7
- Use Other Languages - Translations.....7
- Try Freewriting.....8

So, you know what "topic" to write about, but how do you come up with WHAT to write about that topic? You may have identified "making money" as your topic, but what will you write about "making money"?

Will it be Internet related? Stocks and bonds? Direct mail? Home-based business? Fundraising?

And when you narrow it down to the actual subject, what kind of information will you share in the eBook?

That's what this section will hopefully help you to decide by exploring some ways to generate ideas and to do some research.

Brainstorm To Get Other Folks' Ideas.

Whether you get family members, a group of friends, or other writers together, brainstorming is a wonderful way to beat Writer's Block. When you are stuck, make brainstorming fun. You can sit and just start throwing ideas out or make a game by putting ideas in a hat and then passing it around to read or act out.

We call this a "mastermind" session.

And you'd be absolutely amazed at how productive it can be. Folks throw out ideas that you never even thought of. They offer opinions that you weren't even close to considering. Why? Because they think differently than you do. And that can be a good thing.

Are you having trouble with generating ideas for your eBook, or expanding upon what you are already writing about? Get a group of folks together (or even ONE person is a start) and ask questions. Explain what you are writing about and ask for suggestions, ideas and opinions.

Voila -- with the wave of a magic wand, you've got more ideas and a fresh perspective to write from.

I know. I know. When I say "research" you envision some guy up late at night with fifteen books open, 5 empty Coca Cola cans (he needs the caffeine to stay awake!) and an anxious look on his face.

Research scares the heck out of most folks. It sounds too much like doing a term paper for a trigger happy high school English teacher with a red pen in her hand!

But, it doesn't have to be that way. Let's look at some (slightly less painful) ways of getting ideas for your eBook.

Collect Ideas.

I am what I refer to as an "Idea collector." I collect ideas to use later in my writing.

When something grabs your attention, no matter where you are, write it down and capture as much information as you can. Thoughts could come to you at any time. You might be grocery shopping or at your son's soccer game. The best thing is to be prepared and always keep a pad of paper and pen with you. Or, even better than that is to have a small hand-held voice recorder.

You'll be amazed at where inspiration hits you. For example, when sitting at your child's outdoor sporting event, focus on things going on around you. Perhaps you see a child playing off by himself in the dirt and you watch as another child around the same age slowly and shyly approaches wanting to make a friend. Before long, they have bonded and are now sharing their toys together. Write the scenario down and later think about ways you could use that story to illustrate a point when you are writing your eBook. A pad of paper and pen (or the voice recorder) will soon become your greatest companion.

NOTE: And the "ideas" you collect don't necessarily have to apply to your CURRENT writing project. I collect ideas that sit in my "idea file" for months -- even years -- before I ever use them. But, they are there when I need them, always giving me something new to draw from, and something new and fresh to spawn ideas.

Use Childhood Memories.

Here's a great exercise. Sit down with a pad and paper and start writing down childhood experiences. Start with a specific age and think about the school you attended at that time, the friends you hung around, the style of the clothes you wore, a favorite pet, anything you can. You will be amazed at how many ideas you can develop that can be useful to you in writing, or that spawn other ideas for your eBook.

Just as you revisited your own childhood, talk to other family members or friends and ask them to share stories about their upbringing. For example, one writer asked a close friend from Israel about her experiences as a child during World War II. What unfolded was a wonderful story of determination, as the friend shared how her family had withstood persecution and survived horrible ordeals. Just like that a new chapter to an eBook was added, "How to Overcome Opposition: 7 Secrets From A Survivor."

Wow -- it's amazing how looking at childhood memories (and ALL past experiences) can be used to develop ideas for use in your eBook content.

Make a List.

If you aren't sure how the exact content of your article will come together, you might consider writing out a list. Just start writing down different words associated with the subject you want to write about and in most cases, when you finish this exercise, you have quite a bit of information that you hadn't considered before.

Just start writing down a list of things your reader would be interested in knowing. Doesn't matter if some of them don't make sense -- write them down anyway. As you look back over the list, those seemingly unfitting ideas might launch into other related ideas that you CAN use. Write down everything you can think of, and then decide what you can use.

You'll almost always find 10-15 new ideas to write about -- which can turn into a lot more content.

Listen.

Listen to people. Whether you're shopping, at the job, or in the gym, listen to what people are saying. What subjects are being discussed? What seems to be important to other people? Many times, you will get ideas based on everyday discussions. Having good listening skills is a huge benefit to writers.

Don't forget the kids. Kids are innocent and provide a sincerity that is often missed with adults. If you have children of your own, nieces or nephews, or friends with smaller children, sit down and just talk to them. Believe me - you will hear all kinds of things that will soon get you out of Writer's Block. They possess such great imaginations that they will actually help yours kick into high gear.

Attend a workshop. Listen to a teleseminar or conference call. Sit in on a class. Do an interview. Absorb information that other people are sharing and extract IDEAS that you can use yourself.

Analyze Data.

Conduct some analysis with people who can contribute to the topic you are writing about. Do a survey. Take a poll. Ask questions. Have them ASK YOU questions. Compile all of the information and you've got even more ideas for writing your content.

For example: I know of a marketer online who wanted to put together an eBook for newcomers to the web to help them learn how to do business online. He had a half dozen or so ideas about what to share, but that was all. He knew that "newbies" have a lot more questions than that! But, he didn't know what they were -- being an EXPERIENCED web marketer, he took a lot of "basic" things for granted.

So, what did he do? He sent a [SURVEY](#) out to people on his newsletter list and the lists of his online marketing friends.

The result: Over 200 questions that newbies wanted answered!

That's around 195 more "ideas" than he started out with.

And that's also a GREAT way to come up with new ideas...ask questions and have folks ask you questions.

Read. Read. Read.

An excellent way to get the writing juices flowing again is to read. Look at magazines to get ideas. Often times, an article will be well written but it might only touch on a portion of a subject. An example might be that you open up an interior decorating magazine and spot a wonderfully written article on making quilts. The article talks about things that a quilt could be used for and some basic instructions on how to make one. However, without plagiarizing that article, what other things about quilts could be written on. Perhaps historical information could be added, or locations of museums. People might be interested in knowing the best type of fabric to use. Many people start a good article but only cover a small portion of the subject matter.

One of my favorite things to do to generate ideas for my writing and to overcome the dreaded writer's block is to spend a few hours in my favorite bookstore. I love to browse through books and look for ideas. Again, we're not talking about stealing someone's content, we are talking about finding ideas which you can write your own original content.

Visit a bookstore. Or a library. Or a magazine stand. And just browse through materials relating to what you are writing about. And you are almost certain to find some great ideas to write about.

Watch TV or Movies.

TV is another source for ideas. As you know, television covers anything and everything and if you're struggling with Writer's Block, there will be something that will help spur your mind into action.

With 598,000,281 different stations to watch, you're bound to find something helpful! :o)

If you want to write an eBook on snakes, sit down and watch the Discovery Channel. You will gain a ton of important information and once again, you can determine what wasn't covered. If the show covers the detailed information on the top 10 venomous snakes in the United States, why not do research on the next five.

Ideas are often found by using the ol' remote control!

Play The Alphabet Game.

Here's another great idea generator exercise. Starting with the letter "A" in the alphabet, literally start thinking of events, places, people, items, verbs, etc., that start with that letter, which are related to your eBook topic. The goal is to go all the way to "Z." This is a great way to shake loose Writer's Block.

For example: if you are writing an eBook on internet marketing, here are some ideas...

A = affiliates
B = build a list
C = conversion
D = digital products
e = ezine
f = follow-up
g = google.com

And you would complete that all the way through Z.

Do you think any new ideas could be generated from such a list? Of course!

Try it -- you can thank me later. :o)

Look Around.

Look around your home. Are there special mementos, pictures, smells, colors that bring a thought to your mind? Sitting in a chair in your living room or family room, start at one side of the room and slowly look at each item. Obviously, everything will have a meaning. Perhaps it was a sculpture purchased when you were in Paris, or a candleholder given to you as a gift from your kids.

This is another visual exercise that helps to pull ideas into your mind when you're struggling.

A variation of this is to get out your photo book and revisit the experiences of the past. They say that a "picture is worth a thousand words." Hmmm. A couple dozen photos and your eBook will be done. <smile>

But seriously, looking through photo albums spawns a lot of feelings and memories that can be very helpful in generating ideas for your content...

If you are writing an eBook on dieting and see a picture of you and your friends hiking, it could easily launch into creative ideas for exercise (hiking, backpacking, park trails, mall-walking, mountain climbing, etc.)

If you are writing an eBook on planning vacations and see a picture of yourself at an "off-the-path" restaurant which could easily give you more ideas about "looking for the hidden gems" on your trip. (take the old highways instead of the interstates, stop in all the small towns and explore, here are 10 places you should check out, what to look for, etc.)

Additionally, by reliving your own memories through photographs, it gives you more personal stories and experiences to share -- giving you MORE content for your eBook, further establishing your expertise on the subject, further enhancing the reader enjoyment and better illustrating a point you are attempting to make.

Use the Internet.

The "information highway" is at your fingertips. Just about anything you could want to know is only a few clicks away.

At any given time, there are millions of people around the globe on the Internet. If you are looking for something in particular or trying to locate information on a person, place, or thing, the Internet has it. The key to good Internet research is know where to go and how to search.

Although there are hundreds of search engines on the Internet, some of the larger ones will give you the most information. Some of the top sites are Google.com, Lycos.com, Yahoo.com, DogPile.com, and Northernlight.com.

Each search engine has what are called spiders or crawlers that go out and search the Internet. They then bring the information back and is sorted and indexed. When a person conducts a search, the results are coming from the indexes that have been built.

To obtain information, simply type in what you're looking for in the search field and that's it. Searches consisting of two to four words get the best results.

I always recommend starting here.

Visit the Library.

The library has been around for many years offering archived and new information on millions of subjects. New technology has allowed most libraries to offer better search tools, thus resulting in better results.

If you need to locate information about a specific event that happened in 1957, you can go back to the archived microfilm and locate that very information. Old newspaper stores, obituaries, weddings, and births can all be found. Although the Internet has become the number one tool for conducting research, the library is still a viable source and in some instances, is still better.

Plus, you've got an assistant at the Library -- the Librarian! Ask her (or him) for help finding what you are looking for (much of it is even computer driven these days).

Conduct Interviews.

Find some interesting people in your church, school, work, or even family and friends who have had a unique experience in life and conduct an interview with them. Sometimes we think we know someone well until we take time to talk to him or her – really talk.

For example, one young woman interviewed her own mother. She thought she knew everything about her and her life but during the course of the interview, she discovered cherished pieces of her life that she didn't even know existed. Her own mother had her ears pierced at age eight, in 1935, by Chief White Feather, the grandson of Chief Sitting Bull. He lived in Indiana down the street from her and took a real liking to her. The daughter had no idea! Interviews will unearth all types of buried treasures.

And look for EXPERTS in your field of interest. Ask them a handful of questions and then use the entire interview as an actual part of your eBook.

Use Other Languages - Translations.

This is a fun exercise and a wonderful way to come up with new ideas. Take words that you like, research them in other languages, and then translate them.

As an example, the word “hip” in Spanish is Cadera (Ka-dare-a). That has a nice sound. Look at various languages such as German, Italian, Spanish, French, etc. If there is a word that's significant to your book or article such as “cliff” or “ocean,” conduct some research and see how those translate.

The Latin term "Carpe Dieme" ("Seize The Day") became the focal point of the wonderful movie "Dead Poets' Society." An expression from another language can turn into an entire chapter of your eBook (or even your next movie :o)

Explore and see what you can come up with.

Try Freewriting.

This exercise is powerful and a wonderful tool. Set your timer for 10 minutes, have a pad of paper and pen in front of you, and just start writing. (Or the ol' computer, if you're like me.) You can write using sentences, words, poems, stories, whatever you want. Just write and don't stop until your timer has gone off.

This allows your mind to express itself freely without any limitations. When the exercise is complete, dedicate some time to sit back and read what you wrote. Some of it you may remember while a lot of it will surprise you. This is a great way to organize thoughts and strengthen the mind.

And you'd be amazed at how many absolutely mind-boggling ideas come out of these brain storming sessions. Really you would.

But don't take my word for it.

Try it yourself.