

# Writer's Journal: Experimenting With Generating Ideas

## Mind Recording

Time yourself to write for five minutes nonstop without lifting pen from paper. Don't pre-plan what you want to write; instead, jot down whatever comes into your mind, even if it doesn't seem to make immediate sense. According to the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a constant movie reels inside our minds that we only need to attend to and record. (You might try playing different types of music to see how the background mood affects your writing.)

## Free Associating

Pick a word—one you like for its sound and meaning. You may want to select one with multiple denotations and connotations. Write down all of your associations or experiences related to this word. Don't worry about giving unity to your ideas; instead, aim for rich diversity. Use the word like a kaleidoscope, turning it to create new configurations.

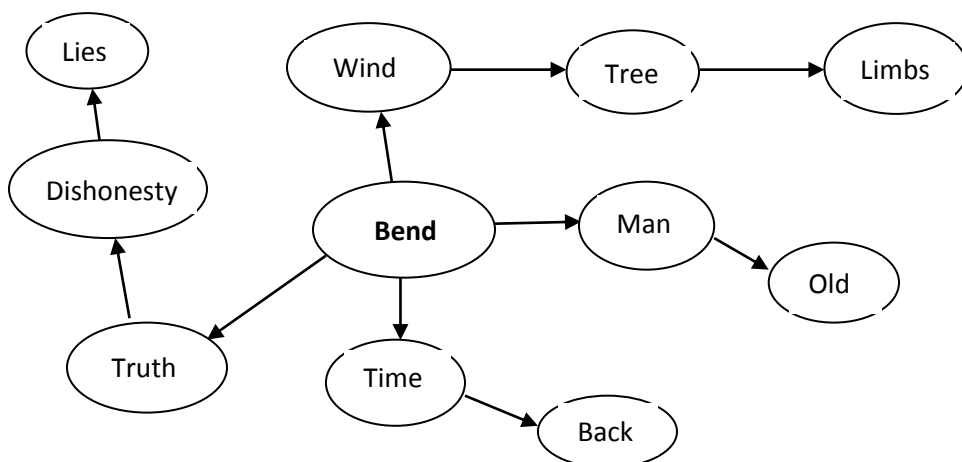
*Example:* The word ring might trigger associations to childhood ring games you used to play, a stain from a wet glass on a tabletop, thoughts about marriage, a circle of friends, things in your life that are circular in shape, an athletic arena, etc.

## Clustering

According to Gabrielle Lusser Rico in Writing the Natural Way, "clustering is a non-linear brainstorming process akin to free association. It makes an invisible Design-mind process visible through a nonlinear spilling out of lightening associations that allows patterns to emerge. Through clustering we naturally come up with a multitude of choices from a part of our mind where the experiences of a lifetime mill and mingle" (28).

Begin by writing a word or phrase, circled, in the middle of your paper. Then relax, and, without logically thinking, quickly jot down words, images, ideas, experiences that come automatically to your mind in response to your nucleus (first word). Circle each new idea and connect it with a line to your nucleus word so that your ideas radiate out from the center. Stop only when you have exhausted your associations. Finally, select from your clustering exercise to create a short poem.

Below is an example of clustering associations to the word bend and a poem derived from the exercise.



Old man, you bend in time like  
tree limbs in the wind.  
Your truth lies deep,  
unchanged by aging limbs  
or bending back.

J.E. Glasser