

Clustering

Preview

Introduction

This information on clustering as a pre-writing procedure appeared originally in *Writing the Natural Way*, pages 28 and following.

It was —

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 - published in 1983 by:
J.P. Tarcher, Inc.
9110 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90069
-

Finder

You can find the following contents on the pages shown.

Page Information

- 2 [The Clustering Procedure — Doorway to Your Design Mind](#)
 - 6 [Guided Practice: Clustering](#)
-

The Clustering Procedure — Doorway to Your Design Mind

Definition

Clustering is a nonlinear brainstorming procedure akin to free association. It makes visible an invisible action of your Design Mind through a nonlinear spilling out of lightning associations.

Purpose

Use clustering as a pre-writing procedure to —

- impel you to write.
 - allow patterns to emerge.
 - bypass your Sign Mind's critical censorship.
 - free you from "writer's block."
 - have choices for formulating and developing your thought.
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Benefits

The clustering procedure benefits you in many ways: it —

- never fails.
- is a self-organizing procedure.
- generates inspiration and insight.
- undercuts tension, anxiety, and resistance.
- blocks the critical censorship of the Sign Mind.
- appeals to information-processing style of Design Mind.
- programs the receptive Design Mind to deal with novelty, ambiguity, and the unknown.

Note: If we are receptive, ideas come of their own accord.

More...

More... The Clustering Procedure

Assumptions about inspiration

For centuries, we have assumed that inspiration leaps at us out of nowhere, or that we have no choice but to wait for it to happen.

Reference

In *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Marilyn Ferguson observes that —

- inspiration is not the province of only a chosen few.
 - inspiration is available to all of us.
 - we all need to learn to develop our innate capacities.
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Sudden focus for writing

You will be surprised to see patterns forming as you spill out seemingly random words and phrases around a center.

A moment comes when you suddenly sense a focus for writing — a moment characterized by an “aha!” feeling.

- This moment is similar to watching clouds, and seeing just clouds.
- You see a horse or a duck or Lincoln’s profile in a sudden moment of recognition.

The emotional surge of good feeling that accompanies the moment of recognition allows you to begin writing.

Action

Follow these steps to create a cluster.

Step	Action
1	Begin with a nucleus word, circled, on a fresh page.
2	Let go of judgment and begin to flow with any current of connections that come into your head.
3	Write these down rapidly — <ul style="list-style-type: none">• each in its own circle.• radiating outward from the center in any direction they want to go.
4	Connect each new word or phrase with a line to the preceding circle.
5	When something new and different strikes you, begin again at the central nucleus and radiate outward.
6	Stop clustering when you exhaust those associations.
7	Feel free to use only some of the ideas in your cluster.

More...

More... The Clustering Procedure

Anxious feelings

You may experience a sense of randomness as you cluster.
If you are somewhat skeptical, you may experience an anxious feeling that it isn't leading anywhere.

Source of feelings

Your logical Sign Mind —

- is the source of these thoughts of randomness or skepticism.
- wants to let you know how foolish you are by not putting your thoughts down in logical sequences.

Need for trust

Trust this natural mental action.

- We all cluster mentally throughout our lives without knowing it.
- We have simply never made these clusterings visible on paper.

Not logical

Clustering is your Design Mind's shorthand.
Design Mind knows where it is headed, even if you don't.
It has a wisdom of its own, shaping ends that you can't really evaluate yet.

- This wisdom has nothing to do with logic.
- If you try to apply logic to what you have just clustered, then you will destroy the sense of knowing where you're headed.

Freedom from anxiety

Remember two points to get rid of anxiety and become more playful.

- The results of clustering are neither right nor wrong.
- You are not responsible for any particular order of ideas or any special information.

Persistence guidelines

You need to persist while using the clustering procedure.
These guidelines govern your persistence.

- Don't dwell on what goes where.
- Let each association find its own place.
- Continue to cluster.
- Draw lines or arrows to associations that seem to go together.

More...

More... The Clustering Procedure

Relaxation guidelines

While you are clustering, you may momentarily run out of associations.
Apply these guidelines to remain relaxed.

- Doodle a bit.
 - Fill in arrows.
 - Darken lines.
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Results of relaxation

Relaxed receptivity to ideas usually generates another spurt of associations.
Then you simply begin to write.
The words will come. The writing takes over and writes itself.

Cue to stop

At some point, you experience a sudden sense of what you are going
to write about. Stop clustering and begin writing.

[Back to Clustering Finder](#)

Guided Practice: Clustering

Purpose

Your aim is to produce a piece of writing which is self-contained and triggered by the word, “problem.”

Preparing action

Follow these steps to prepare yourself to write.

Before you begin,

1. find a quiet, uninterrupted time and place to write.
2. plan on clustering and writing for about ten minutes.

As you begin,

1. write the word, “problem,” in the upper third of the page and circle it, leaving the lower two-thirds of the page for writing.
 2. let your playful, creative Design Mind make connections.
 3. spill whatever associations come to you onto paper.
-

Guidelines for beginning

Apply these guidelines as you begin clustering.

- Get comfortable with the process.
 - Keep the childlike attitude of newness and wonder.
 - Avoid judging or choosing. Simply let go and write.
 - Don’t think too long or analyze.
-

Seeming chaos

At first, your Sign Mind —

- may want to interfere.
- scold you that this is foolish, or illogical, or chaotic.

Reassure yourself.

This seeming chaos is an important first phase of the creative process that you are engaging in.

More...

More... Guided Practice: Clustering

Continuing action

As you continue to cluster,

1. let the words or phrases radiate outward from the nucleus word, and draw a circle around each of them.
 2. connect those associations that seem related with lines.
 3. add arrows to indicate direction, if you wish.
 4. continue jotting down associations and ideas triggered by the word “problem” for a minute or two, immersing yourself in the activity.
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Suspending time and judgment

An “unthinking” quality to this procedure suspends time.

This procedure is —

- your Design Mind’s shorthand made accessible to you.
 - one you can develop when you write.
 - one nobody else will judge.
 - for you alone.
-

Guidelines for continuing

Apply these guidelines as you continue clustering.

- Connect each association as you see fit.
 - Let clustering happen naturally.
 - Let your patterning Design Mind guide you.
 - Don’t worry about the procedure.
 - Don’t censor it with objections from Sign Mind.
-

Ending action

When you come to the end,

1. doodle a bit by putting arrows on your existing cluster.
 2. stop clustering when you feel a sudden, strong urge to write — “Aha! I think I know what I want to say.”
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Notes

This happens usually after one to two minutes.

This awareness of a direction will creep up on you gradually, as though someone were slowly unveiling a sculpture. You will experience a certain, satisfying feeling that you have something to write about.

More...

More... Guided Practice: Clustering

Writing action Follow these steps to apply the results of clustering to your writing.

Step	Action	Comments
1	Scan the clustered perceptions and insights of your Design Mind for a moment.	Something therein will suggest your first sentence to you, and you're off. Students rarely report difficulty writing that first sentence. On the contrary, they report it as being effortless.
2	If you feel stuck, then write about anything from the cluster.	The next thing, and the next thing after that, will come because your Design Mind has already perceived a pattern of meaning. Trust it.
3	Write for about eight minutes, and no more than three-quarters of a page.	You are now in an oscillating activity, from Design to Sign, and back to Design. As you write, you will shift from Design-Mind vision or pattern to Sign-Mind sequencing, the <ul style="list-style-type: none">• vision guiding the sequencing.• sequencing articulating the vision.
4	Choose from your cluster only what seems to fit the whole.	You have given yourself a profusion of choices. You do not need to force everything from the cluster into your piece.

Writing guidelines

Apply these guidelines as you write.

- Use what feels comfortable, what seems to relate and make sense.
 - Ignore the rest.
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More...

More... Guided Practice: Clustering

Description of closure Closure brings your writing activity full circle by referring to what started your thinking in the first place.

Cue When you think you have “storied” your thinking on “problem,” you are ready for closure.

Purpose for closure Use closure to obtain a piece of writing which is fully formed and self-contained.

Closure action Follow these steps to accomplish the wholeness of closure.

1. Look at your beginning.
2. Hook your ending into the beginning by repeating a —
 - word,
 - phrase,
 - dominant thought, *or*
 - emotionthat was also present in your opening line or two.

Action Follow these steps to edit your writing piece.

Step	Action
1	Read aloud what you have written.
2	Spend a minute or two making any changes that you think will improve the whole.
3	Rework your piece for anywhere from one to five minutes.
4	Stop when you have a strong sense that everything in it belongs there.

[Back to Appendix Finder](#)

