
Cubing

CUBING is a technique for swiftly considering a subject from 6 points of view. The emphasis is on *swiftly* and *6*.

Often writers can't get going on a subject because they are locked in on a single way of looking at the topic—and that's where cubing works very well. CUBING lets you have a single point of view for only 3 to 5 minutes, then moves you on to the next point of view. When you've finished CUBING, you've spent 18 to 30 minutes, and you've really loosened up the soil of your mind. This technique moves very swiftly and is quite structured.

TWO RULES TO FOLLOW IN CUBING

1. Use all six sides of the cube.
2. Move fast. Don't allow yourself more than 3 to 5 minutes on each side of the cube.

Rule 1: Use All 6 Sides of the Cube

Imagine a cube. Think of it as a solid block. Now imagine that each side has something different written on it.

One side of the cube says: *Describe it.*

Another side says: *Compare it.*

A third side says: *Associate it.*

The fourth says: *Analyze it.*

The fifth says: *Apply it.*

The sixth side says: *Argue for or against it.*

For the cubing technique, you need to use all six sides. This is not an exercise in describing, analyzing, or arguing. It is a technique to help you learn to look at a subject from a variety of perspectives. Consequently, doing just one of the sides won't work. Doing just one side is like a mechanical assignment—"describe this picture." You may decide after doing all six sides that you do want to describe it; but by then your decision will be meaningful and intelligent, based on your having something to say in the form of a description. So remember:

cubing takes all six sides.

Rule 2: Move Fast. Don't Allow Yourself More Than 3 to 5 Minutes on Each Side of the Cube

The energy in this creating technique comes from shifting your perspective on the subject often. By moving around the cube, one side after another, in rapid-fire succession, you see that your subject can be looked at from a lot of different angles and that you can talk about it in a lot of different ways. You are not hunting for something to say from each perspective; you are taking a quick run into your mind for whatever presents itself on that angle, and the quickness of the run is important. It is the quick switch that makes the CUBING work.

To practice this creating technique, let's use a picture from a poster or magazine. Remember the rules: Use all 6 sides of the cube and move fast, allowing no more than 3 to 5 minutes per side. Look at the picture. Get your paper and pen ready.

Begin. Do each of the 6 steps in order, spending no more than 3 to 5 minutes on each.

1. Describe it. Look at the subject closely and describe what you see. Colors, shapes, sizes, and so forth.
2. Compare it. What is it similar to? What is it different from?
3. Associate it. What does it make you think of? What comes into your mind? It can be similar things, or you can think of different things, different times, places, people. Just let your mind go and see what associations you have for this subject.
4. Analyze it. Tell how it's made (you don't have to know; you can make it up), what its parts are, or how it relates to other things.
5. Apply it. Tell what you can do with it, how it can be used.
6. Argue for or against it. Go ahead and take a stand. Use any kind of reasons you want to—rational, silly, or anywhere in between.

When you have finished all six, read over what you have written. If one angle or perspective strikes you as particularly promising, you probably have come up with a focus for an essay. Perhaps there was one thing you really enjoyed writing during the cubing activity, something that made you smile, something that caused your pen to move faster, something you felt some interest in and even some excitement about. That may well become the center for your essay.

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