Once you have chosen a topic, established a plan, collected, coded and organized your data the next step is to begin the drafting process! In explaining your findings, focus on clarity and efficiency overall. Your logic and organization should be clear to a reader. But how do you move from collecting data to conceptualizing a draft of your thesis or dissertation?

Try one or more of the strategies below to get started writing!

1. **Talk It Out**
   Working with a partner, friend or spouse, explain the results of your data out loud. As your partner listens have them take notes, or consider scheduling a writing session after your conversation.

2. **Concept Mapping**
   With a concept map you move from brainstorming key topics, ideas, and data points for your topic to grouping them (consider using post-its for easy shuffling and reorganizing) and adding key linking words and phrases to show their relationships, contrasts, or progression. Flip this page over for two examples of concept mapping.

3. **Shift Focus**
   By now you have spent a great deal of time examining your topic or question from one point of view. But what happens if you shift focus to a new, but related issue within your topic? Perhaps you will find a new way to explain your findings with a small shift in focus.

4. **Reverse Brainstorm**
   Move away from the particulars of your data or research for the moment and brainstorm some big-picture claims you’d like to be able to make. Be bold with this step—don’t worry if some are beyond your project’s scope or beyond what your research can support. Then take one or more of the most important of these claims and work backwards: What are the steps and what is the evidence you would need to support such a claim? What do you have and what else would you need to advance this claim?

5. **Metaphor Framework**
   Brainstorm metaphors you could use to explain your information. For example, is your data the Wild West, with cowboys and shootouts and lawlessness? Or is it a football game, with two opposing sides playing for an audience’s entertainment? This creative exercise may help you find a new way to explain your data (with or without the metaphor!).

Adapted from:
*Surviving Your Dissertation* by Kjell Erik Rudestam and Rae R. Newton
*Destination Dissertation* by Sonja K. Foss and William Waters
Figure 1 An example of a partial concept map for flexibility showing how concepts and propositions are related.