Take a quick look at some online images of icebergs. While the text accompanying some of these images may have incorrect information about how old icebergs may be, these massive ice structures are amazing.

Ernest Hemingway used the ICEBERG THEORY in his writing, especially in his short stories. Hemingway felt that the information he left out of the story, or only hinted at, was just as important as what he included. Hemingway left so much background, detail and discussion out of his stories that the carefully-chosen words he did use were just the TIP of the iceberg.

The challenge for the writer using this technique is in deciding which information and details should be included, and which should be left unstated. How much information must be spelled out in order for the reader to have a full picture of the entire character, setting, relationships, or plot? How much should be left to the reader's interpretation?

You can use this iceberg theory to compose a visual summary of any topic. You could use it to help organize your thoughts to get started on a writing project, or as a creative way of presenting your ideas and research on a topic.

1. Draw a simple outline shape of an iceberg that covers most of your paper. Draw a line to represent the water in which the iceberg is floating, showing that most of the iceberg is under water.

2. In the iceberg, above the waterline, write a topic sentence, thesis statement, or a broad idea, such as a report title.

3. We know that what appears above the waterline is but the tip of the iceberg; there is much more detail underlying this topic or statement than first meets the eye. Write those supporting details and background information under the waterline, in the part of the iceberg that isn't visible from above the water.
4. If you're using the iceberg approach to get ready to write, keep your diagram handy as you work. You might decide to number the items you've written under the water in the order you would use them. Or you could circle topics that go together naturally, or use symbols or colors to group related ideas together – whatever works for you.

   The idea is to use this iceberg graphic as a tool to help you organize or present your thoughts. It might help to check or cross off ideas as you use them in your writing.

5. If you've designed your iceberg graphic as a presentation, consider using color and then mounting the paper on construction paper or cardstock. You might want to use the graphic as the centerpiece on a poster board or tri-fold that you put together to showcase your research and learning on a particular subject.