Building an argument as you go

Thinking, reading, thinking, writing - repeat...
You can develop the steps of your argument in your writing as you go, identifying the points you want to make and the evidence you will use.

1. Analyse the essay title or assignment brief
2. Get an overview
   - Text book
   - Lecture notes
   - Introductory reading
3. Your first thoughts:
   - Yes?
   - No?
   - Maybe?

Create a working hypothesis
Write an initial response offering a few conclusions as a basic answer to the essay title or assignment brief. Stick to two or three sentences. You will change and develop it as you read and investigate the topic.

Test your hypothesis with questions

Step one: Pretend you disagree - why would you disagree?
Step two: Pretend you agree totally - and add something else in support.
Step three: Agree to some extent, but point out weaknesses.

- What evidence can I find in support of / against this?
- What theoretical perspectives does it fit / not fit with?
- What do the main authors or thinkers have to say?
- Make comparisons – look for differences and similarities.

Make these questions more and more specific as you read more.

Modify and develop your answer as you read

How far – if at all – does each text confirm your answer?
How far – if at all – does it contradict your answer?
Do you need to modify your answer? Why? In what way?
Will you keep your response and conclusions the same?
Does it suggest new questions/ issues you need to address?
How will you build these into your argument?