Prewriting Resource Guide

Generating ideas for writing.

Prewriting is any activity that helps you...

• decide on or clarify your topic;
• brainstorm ideas on the subject;
• find your voice;
• organize your ideas; and
• list places you can research information.

Prewriting Strategies

• Graphic organizers (What-Why-How);
• Charts (Topic T-Chart);
• Story webs; and
• Word lists.

Sometimes you have a choice about the topic.

How do you find things you care and feel strongly about?

• Make a T-Chart on a piece of paper and brainstorm lists of ideas.
• After you have made a list of possible ideas, it is time to pick your topic.

  • Pick something that you...
  ___ have strong feelings about;
  ___ know a lot about;
  ___ can describe in great detail;
  ___ think will interest your audience; and
  ___ think will be worth reading for your audience.
Deconstructing a Prompt

Constructing means to build and deconstructing means to take apart

To deconstruct a prompt:
1. Read it.
2. Take it apart.
3. Understand what you need to do.
4. Determine how to respond to the prompt correctly.

Identifying Key Parts of a Written Prompt

Does the prompt give you suggestions to get started?
• Look for suggestions in the prompt to get you started (ideas to think about, verbs that tell you what to do).
• Use key words from the prompt to construct your thesis statement.

Picking Your Topic

You can use the word RAFTS to help you remember how to deconstruct a prompt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>What role do you take as the writer? (student, citizen, expert)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Who is your audience? (class, parent, teacher, friend)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>What kind of response are you writing? (essay, letter, descriptive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>What are the verbs in the prompt asking you to do? (advise your classmate, justify your opinion, explain why...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong key words</td>
<td>What are the key words that you need to include in your response? Hint: Use these words to construct your thesis statement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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What-Why-How: A Prewriting Strategy

Step 1. **What do you think?**

Write one sentence stating your opinion. It can also be your main idea.

**Focus** on something that you:

• have a strong feeling about;
• can describe in great detail;
• think will interest your audience; and
• think will be worth reading for your audience.


Step 2. **Why do you think it?**

The reasons you have to support your opinion.

Think about your topic/opinion statement and brainstorm reasons why you feel the way you do about it.

Write the reasons you have to support your opinion statement in the “Why” column of the What-Why-How Strategy Form.

Step 3. **How do you know?**

The evidence, examples, or quote(s) you have to support each reason.

Identify the evidence, examples, or quote(s) you have to support each reason in the “Why” column.

Write the evidence, examples, or quote(s) in the “How” column of the What-Why-How Strategy Form.

Your audience needs the evidence to understand your opinion.

Three things to keep in mind as you develop your ideas.

• **Purpose** – Why are you writing this?
• **Audience** – Why is it important to the audience?
• **Key words** – What are the important words that help you focus your thinking?

Use the completed What-Why-How Strategy Form to organize your ideas on the Essay Organizer Form.

There is an Essay Organizer Form for either a 5 or 6 paragraph essay.

**Locate the What-Why-How Strategy and Essay Organizer Forms.**

Thesis Statement

What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement is the:

• main point of your essay;
• basic stand you take;
• opinion you express; and/or
• Central point you wish to make.

Effective Thesis Statements

Swimming (subject) is a great way to improve physical and mental health (opinion of the subject).

*Compare the effective thesis statement above with ineffective statements below.*

1. A thesis statement makes an assertion; it is NOT a simple statement or observation.
   Simple statement: Kids swim in the ocean.

2. A thesis statement is a main idea; it is NOT a title.
   Title: Swimming is fun.

3. A thesis statement takes a stand; it is NOT an announcement.
   Announcement: This paper is about the benefits of swimming.

4. A thesis statement narrows the topic; it is NOT a broad statement.
   Broad statement: There are many reasons to go swimming.

5. A thesis statement is specific; it is NOT vague.
   Vague: Swimming has many benefits.

Improving a thesis statement

Example of improving a thesis statement:

Simple thesis statement: I believe eating the right foods is very important.

Better thesis statement: Eating the right foods can improve one’s physical appearance, ability to learn, and capability to think critically.