Step 2: Brainstorming

The Writing Center

This worksheet will help you think about and generate ideas for a writing topic. Don't pressure yourself to come up with an idea within 30 seconds; even professional writers can't do that! Give yourself some time, and your ideas will be even better. Write your answers in the spaces provided or on a separate sheet of paper.

Generating a Topic – "I don't know what to write about!"

1. Are there any instructor restrictions or requirements on topics? What are they? Write them here.

2. What are some things you are interested in? Don't just write things because you think your teacher will like it; he/she has read enough essays about gun control and abortion. You are a unique person – pick a unique topic.
   a. Major?
   b. Hobbies (sports, music, etc.)?
   c. Work?
   d. Causes (environment, animals, etc.)?
   e. Political concerns?
   f. Current events?
   g. Volunteer projects?

3. Look at the list you made. Which of those topics fits the assignment, is interesting to you, and has enough available research? Write it here.

4. Is the topic too broad to fully discuss in your paper? Think about word or page limit restrictions. For example, healthcare is way too much to discuss in an 800-word essay. Instead, focus on an aspect of that issue, such as the dangers of residents working 24 hour shifts in hospitals.

Refining a Topic – "Okay, I have a topic – now what?"

1. Is there a controversy associated with this topic? If so, briefly outline the nature and history of the controversy below. You may have to do some background research for this.

2. Who cares about this topic? Why? Should other people care?

3. What opinion do you have on the issue?

4. What are the other stances on the issue?

5. In relation to this topic and issue, what do you want to know more about?

6. Where could you find more information on this topic?