



## Brainstorming Topics

For many of us, the most difficult part of composing is knowing what to write. Here are some strategies for coming up with a topic.

### *Brainstorming*

- Writing as quickly as you can, list every topic you can think of. Don't worry about how good these topics sound; just list as many potential topics as possible. What interests you? What's going on in the news? In your life?
- Review the topics on your list. Notice which topics strike you as especially interesting or promising for an essay. Select a topic that seems like it might have potential, and then brainstorm about that specific topic.

### *Authority Lists*

This invention tool helps us identify our own expertise, that is, what we know well and could write about with authority. You might make a list of:

- Skills you have that not everyone has
- Hobbies you have that not everyone has
- Special roles you've played (Big Brother/Big Sister, camp counselor, manager, aunt/uncle, etc.)
- Skills you've taught to others
- Things you know that not everyone knows
- Places you've visited off the beaten path
- Extraordinary things you've witnessed
- People you know that others might like to know about

### *Inquiry Lists*

You can also list things that you don't know much about, but would like to. These are topics that might lead you to some interesting research:

- Skills you don't have but wish you did
- Hobbies you wish you knew more about
- Special roles others play that interest you
- Things others teach that you want to learn
- Places others have visited that you'd like to see
- People you don't know but wish you did

Lee, Amy and Chris W. Gallagher. *Engaging Writing*. White Plains NY: Longman Press, Forthcoming.  
Odell, Lee and Susan M. Katz. *Writing Now: Shaping Words and Images*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010.