

Topic Brainstorming Worksheet

Part 1: Idea Generation

Use these prompts to generate raw material. Don't censor yourself—write down everything.

Step 1: Initial Topic Area

Broad Subject I'm interested in or assigned:

Step 2: Free-Association Brain Dump

What are the first 5-10 words, phrases, or questions that come to mind when I think about this subject?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Step 3: Question Prompts

Answer these quickly to explore different angles:

- **Who** is involved or affected? _____
- **What** are the key components, events, or products? _____
- **Where** does this happen or matter? _____
- **When** is it relevant (past, present, future)? _____
- **Why** is this topic important or debated? _____
- **How** does it work or how is it changing? _____

Step 4: Perspective Shifts

- If I were a **novice** learning about this, what would confuse or intrigue me?

- If I were an **expert**, what subtle point would I want to explain?

- What's the **most controversial or surprising** aspect?

- What's a **common misconception** about it?

Part 2: Focus & Narrow

Now, review your ideas from Part 1. Look for patterns, standout concepts, or questions that spark your interest.

Step 5: Cluster Similar Ideas

Group related items from your brain dump. Give each cluster a label.

- **Cluster A Label:** _____

Ideas: _____

- **Cluster B Label:** _____

Ideas: _____

- **Cluster C Label:** _____

Ideas: _____

Step 6: Develop Potential Topics

Turn your most promising clusters into 2-3 potential essay topics. Phrase each as a statement or question.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Part 3: Final Evaluation & Selection

Step 7: Test Your Top Candidates

Use this quick checklist for your 2-3 potential topics from Step 6.

Evaluation Criteria	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3
Is it specific enough? (Could a book be written on it, or an essay?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Evaluation Criteria

Topic 1

Topic 2

Topic 3

Is it interesting to me? (Will I enjoy researching/writing it?)

☐ Yes ☐
No

☐ Yes ☐
No

☐ Yes ☐
No

Is it manageable? (Can I cover it well in the assigned length?)

☐ Yes ☐
No

☐ Yes ☐
No

☐ Yes ☐
No

Can I find examples/evidence?

☐ Yes ☐
No

☐ Yes ☐
No

☐ Yes ☐
No

Will it interest my audience?

☐ Yes ☐
No

☐ Yes ☐
No

☐ Yes ☐
No

Step 8: Make Your Choice

My selected essay topic is:

Why I chose it: _____

(Save and print this worksheet. Use it whenever you need to move from a broad subject to a clear, focused essay topic.)