

6+1 Writing Traits

Ideas:

Is this a thesis or main idea?



What are ideas?

Ideas are thoughts, opinions, beliefs, plans — anything your mind thinks, imagines, perceives, or conceives

But for our specific purpose, your writing, ...



ideas are the results of your own research and/or thinking



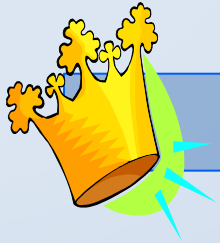
they are the thoughts, beliefs, and observations you will organize around a single, unified, narrow subject for a piece of writing

And please note the words
“single, unified, narrow subject” ...

- ❓ Which pictures do not belong? Why?
- ❓ What might be the common subject?
- ❓ Possible thesis? Supporting ideas?



What is a thesis? A supporting idea?



Thesis

- the controlling idea, the proposition
- a statement of belief, a judgment
- see “[What Is a Thesis or Proposition](#)”
- for a narrative, a theme is like a thesis



Supporting Ideas / Main Ideas

- series of related ideas
- support the thesis
- often called main ideas
- must themselves be supported by evidence

Focus like a laser — and be consistent!

... the bigger your topic, the smaller your writing



select one thesis or controlling idea



narrow the scope of your writing — a broad topic leads to uninspiring, boring writing



make sure your main ideas support the thesis



make sure the evidence and details actually support the main ideas

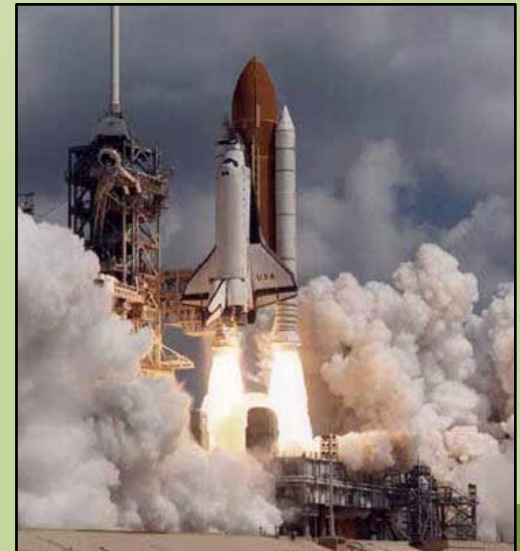
The Rubric: What I am looking for ...

- thesis is focused and specific
- for narratives, topic is focused and specific
- main ideas are clear and specific
- main ideas are relevant and support the thesis
- details are accurate and support the main ideas
- ideas are original and hold reader's attention
- writing that provides new insight or learning
- elaboration of ideas that demonstrates knowledge
- reader's questions are anticipated and answered

6+1 Writing Traits: Ideas

Launch: Getting Started






Gathering ideas and selecting a topic



Getting Started: Where do I begin?

Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end; then stop.
— Lewis Carroll

Begin by gathering your ideas ...

-  brainstorm, territories, corrals, and other tools
-  select your subject or topic
-  narrow your focus, develop the controlling idea or thesis
-  elaborate; develop supporting ideas
-  discover or research the best information to support the main ideas (details)

... and when you're finished writing, stop

Brainstorm!



Brainstorming involves creative play, throwing ideas around, exploration, discovering relationships, experimentation and failed attempts. It might not always seem like you are being productive, but ideas come unexpectedly and in all shapes and sizes.



if you have a prompt, your brainstorming will be for ideas related to the prompt









if you've not been given a prompt ... who knows, you might end up in Oz



either way, the rules are the same ...

Let your mind flow freely ...

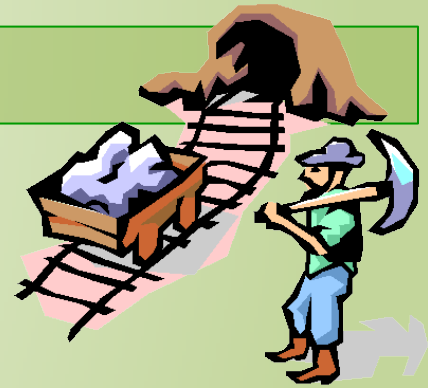


-  write as fast as you can
-  record every thought
-  keep writing until you run out of ideas, but do set a minimum time for your session
-  use whatever organizing strategy or graphic organizer that works for you
-  quantity, not quality, is the key
-  do not judge the ideas during brainstorming

Territories: Stake your claim!

Life is like playing a violin solo in public and learning the instrument as one goes along.

— Samuel Butler



list topics in which you have an interest and about which you believe you are an expert

hobbies, sports, skills, talents, crafts, accomplishments ... anything about which you can share your experience, insights, or “how to” information



write about one of them in detail

Corrals: Keep what you find!

Reading through a writer's notebook is like opening and discovering pearls, rubies and diamonds amidst a pile of rubble and discarded things.



keep a writer's notebook

jot down interesting tidbits as you find them — something you see, read, hear, taste, or even smell ... current events, thoughts that come to you “out of the blue” ...



and like horses in a corral, they will be there when you need them — ready to ride ...

And don't forget these tools!



list your favorite places to visit, or one or two very special places you like to go



flashback: look for items or pictures that stimulate memories or take you back in time



gather pictures from magazines or newspapers; think about what might be happening and why



immerse yourself in the moment — what you've been feeling or thinking about lately



write about one of them in detail; include feelings, sights, sounds, smells, and tastes

Review: Gather ideas, then select one

To get through the most difficult journey we need take only one step at a time, but we must keep on stepping.



Gather your ideas

- brainstorm
- create territories
- use corrals
- favorite places
- favorite activities
- flashbacks
- analyze pictures
- be in the moment



Select an idea

if you've been given a prompt, you can still use tools like brainstorming to develop your ideas

if you've not been given a prompt, you must now make a choice

6+1 Writing Traits: Ideas

In Flight: One the Move

Narrowing your focus and elaborating



Okay, you're moving! What's next?

If you're going to hunt elephants, don't get off the trail for a rabbit.

— T. Boone Pickens

Begin by gathering your ideas ...



brainstorms, territories, corrals, and other tools



select your subject or topic



narrow your focus, develop the controlling idea or thesis



develop supporting ideas; elaborate



discover or research the best information to support the main ideas (details)

... and when you're finished writing, stop

Narrow your focus, develop your thesis

A narrowly-focused topic



- allows in-depth development of the subject
- so you can offer meaningful insights, observations
- which makes your writing more interesting

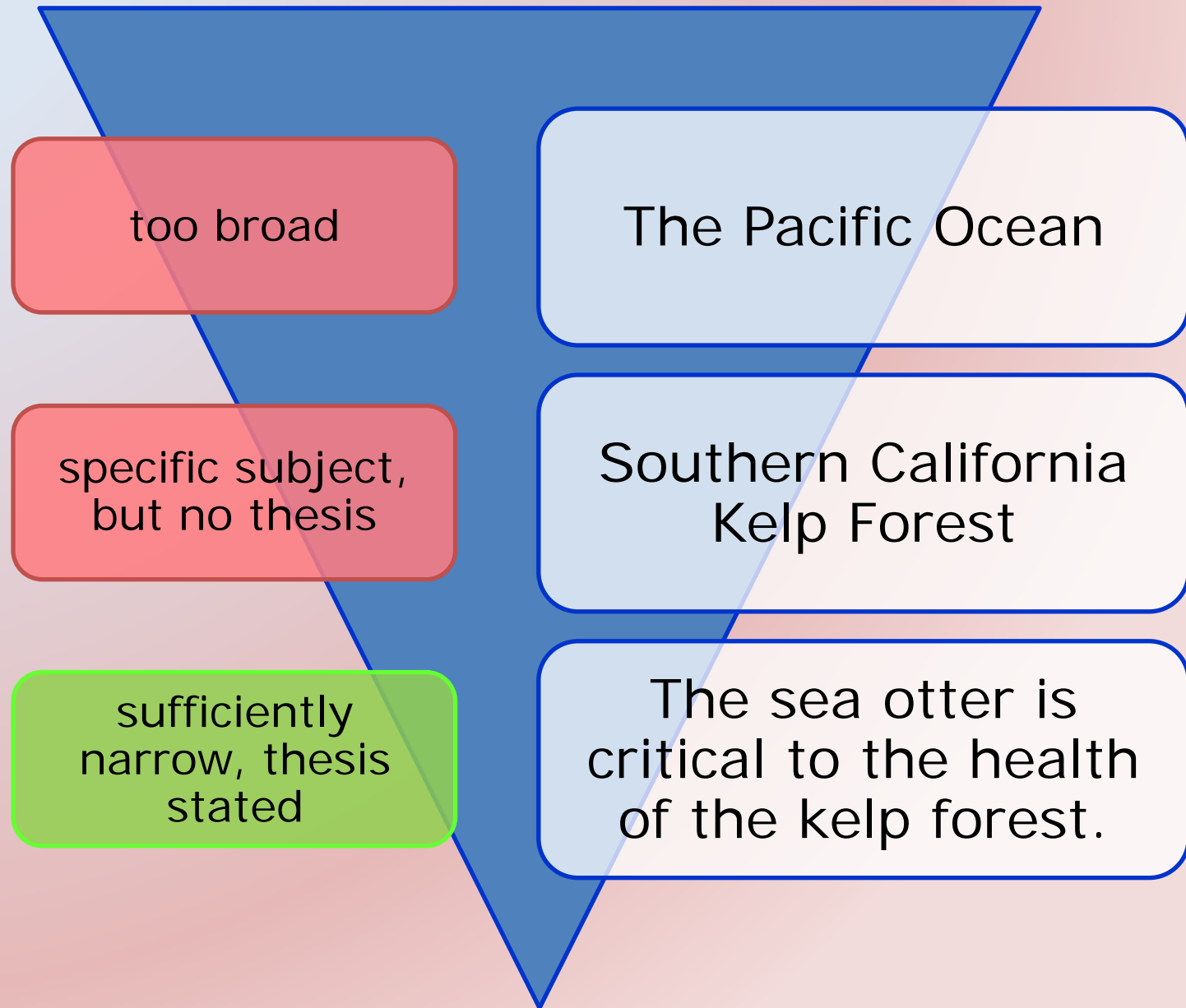
and narrowing also makes writing simpler because it is easier to determine whether or not a main idea or detail is appropriate (belongs)

Develop your thesis or controlling idea



although your thesis will emerge as you focus your topic, be flexible ... because a thesis can change at any time during the writing process ... and remember, for a narrative we talk about a theme

Example: Narrow your focus, develop your thesis



Develop supporting ideas, elaborate

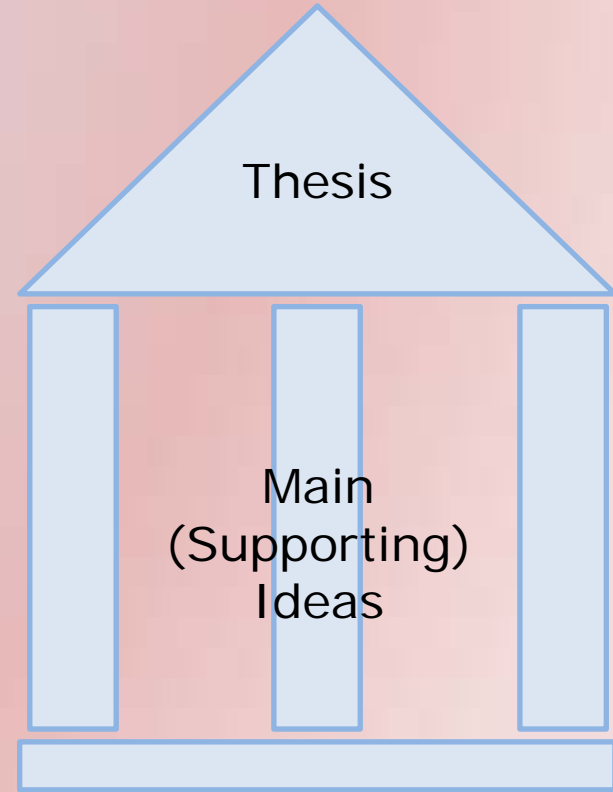
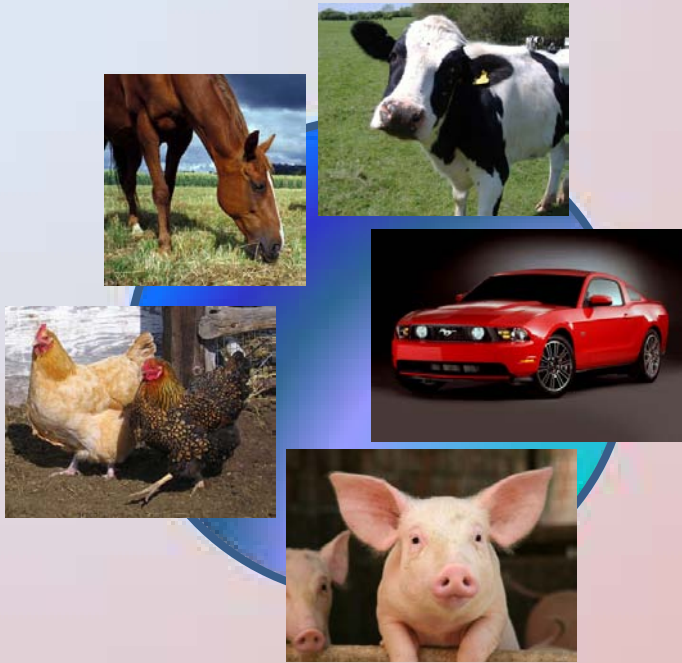
Supporting ideas (or main ideas) — they make your thesis or controlling idea viable ...

- they are the pillars that hold up your thesis
- but each must be focused on the thesis
- and each must be related to the others

Elaborating, or providing details ...

- gives your writing depth
- and provides the evidence to make your case
- but, again, the details must be relevant

Illustration: Develop supporting ideas, elaborate



❓ Again, which ideas do not belong?

❓ And how strong would the building be if you removed one piece? Two?

Elaboration: details, evidence

Tools to help you narrow, focus, develop, elaborate

The following strategies will help

- brainstorming
- using a suitcase
- RAFTS



we've already covered brainstorming — and the process is exactly the same, except now you're using the strategy to narrow, focus, develop, or elaborate rather than using it to help you find a subject about which to write

Suitcase: Stuff it!



Benefits:

- helps gather, discover ideas
- helps classify, organize ideas
- quick and easy

How to pack the suitcase:

- draw the suitcase
- quickly list all words, ideas related to the topic
- highlight the main ideas
- associate the other words with the highlighted ideas

and as long as you can read it ... completeness is more valued than neatness

RAFTS: Ride it to success!



Benefits:

- provides structure for thinking
- but is flexible and adaptable

The planks in your RAFTS are:

- R — know, determine the *role* of the writer (you)
- A — know your *audience*, write for them
- F — determine the correct *format*
- T — zero in on your *topic* and main ideas
- S — writing purpose should include a *strong* verb (e.g., analyze, predict, persuade, compare)

6+1 Writing Traits: Ideas

In Orbit: What a View!

Discovering the best



Great view ... but so much information!

We shall not fail ... give us the tools and we will finish the job.

— Winston Churchill

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select your subject or topic



narrow your focus, develop the controlling idea or thesis



elaborate; develop supporting ideas



discover or research the best information to support the main ideas (details)

... and when you're finished writing, stop

Discovering and honing your information

If you've selected, narrowed, focused, developed, and elaborated, determine whether or not you have the information you need



if more information is required, repeat some steps

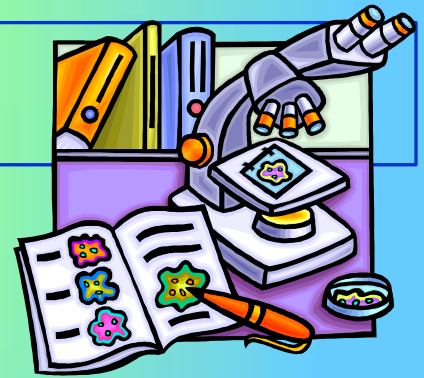
- brainstorm
- suitcase
- corral



ask yourself these questions

- What information am I missing?
- What information might make it more interesting?
- What questions remain unanswered?

If you need to do research ...



- interview experts
- search the Internet
- visit the library
- ask local officials
- magazines
- newspapers
- journals

And remember one critical principle ...

at this point you *cannot* have too much information ... it is always better to have more than you think you will need

- Because you will be in control, and
- then *you can choose* the *best* information

Discovering, honing



There are five keys to honing your data, to discovering the best of the best you have found



Choose the most critical information



Choose the most relevant information



Choose the most interesting information



Prioritize the information



Make sure your information is accurate

And you thought you were through ...

You're in orbit, but now you must organize and write!

