



Douglas College

Douglas College Learning Centre

Prewriting Questions for Exploring Ideas

Questions you can ask to help you think up ideas:

- 1) Can you **describe** something? (5 W's)
 - i. What is it?
 - ii. Who is/was involved?
 - iii. Where? When? How? How long?
 - iv. Can you use your senses to describe it? What does it look like, sound like, feel like, smell like, taste like?
 - v. What details can you add? (specific names, places, dates, numbers, descriptive adjectives)

- 2) How is something the **same** or **different** from something else?
 - i. Can you think of another thing, event, person, or concept that is either similar to or different from your topic?
 - ii. What is similar? How is it similar? In what ways is it similar?
 - iii. How is it different? In what ways is it different?

- 3) What **patterns** can you see?
 - i. What repeats several times or many times?
 - ii. What theme keeps coming up over and over?
 - iii. Is there no noticeable pattern because everything just seems random?

- 4) How did something **change over time**?
 - i. What are the steps in the process?
 - ii. What is the story from beginning to end?
 - iii. How did it develop, grow, improve, deteriorate, or stay the same over time?

- 5) How can you **divide your topic** into its pieces??
- i. What are several **components** or parts that make up your topic?
 - ii. Can you divide your topic into a variety of **types, kinds, or categories**?
 - iii. What are some of the different sides, ways of seeing, perspectives or **points of view** about your topic?
 - iv. What are **the relationships between** your different categories or pieces? How do the various pieces, categories, or sides interact with each other? How do they function together?
- 6) What were the **causes and effects**?
- i. How did something happen or why did it happen?
 1. What were causes or reasons?
 2. Where did something come from or how did it start?
 3. What motivated the outcome? What were people's motivations to act in a certain way?
 - ii. What happened as a result?
 1. What were important consequences or results?
 2. Who or what is affected in negative or positive ways?
 3. What are the implications or possible good or bad outcomes?
 - iii. What was the chain reaction of causes and effects?
 1. Did some results or effects in turn cause other things to happen?
 2. Were some causes/reasons the result of something else?
- 7) Are there **other opinions or positions** about this topic?
- i. Who would disagree with you about your topic or argument?
 - ii. What different opinions or positions do people have on this topic?
 - iii. Why would these people disagree with you?
 - iv. What reasons would they give to argue their position?
 - v. What arguments would you make back to them to show that your position is a good one?