

The Writing Process: Brainstorming

Ask yourself questions

Journalistic questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? So What?

Stasis questions

Conjecture: what are the facts?

Definition: what is the meaning or nature of the issue?

Quality: what is the seriousness of the issue?

Policy: what should we do about the issue?

Stasis theory is a four-question, pre-writing (invention) process developed in ancient Greece by Aristotle and Hermagoras. Later, the stases were refined by Roman rhetoricians, such as Cicero, Quintilian, and Hermogenes. Working through the four stasis questions encourages knowledge building that is important for research, writing, and for working in teams. Stasis theory helps writers conduct critical analyses of the issues they are investigating.

Specifically, stasis theory asks writers to investigate and try to determine:

- The facts (conjecture)
- The meaning or nature of the issue (definition)
- The seriousness of the issue (quality)
- The plan of action (policy).

Classical topics (patterns of argument)

Definition

- How does the dictionary define ____?
- What do I mean by ____?
- What group of things does ____ belong to?
- How is ____ different from other things?
- What parts can ____ be divided into?
- Does ____ mean something now that it didn't years ago? If so, what?
- What other words mean about the same as ____?
- What are some concrete examples of ____?
- When is the meaning of ____ misunderstood?

Comparison/Contrast

- What is ____ similar to? In what ways?
- What is ____ different from? In what ways?
- ____ is superior (inferior) to what? How?
- ____ is most unlike (like) what? How?

Relationship

- What causes ____?

- What are the effects of ____?
- What is the purpose of ____? - What is the consequence of ____?
- What comes before (after) ____?

Testimony

- What have I heard people say about ____?
- What are some facts of statistics about ____?
- Can I quote any proverbs, poems, or sayings about ____?
- Are there any laws about ____?

Circumstance

- Is ____ possible or impossible?
- What qualities, conditions, or circumstances make ____ possible or impossible?
- When did ____ happen previously?
- Who can do ____?
- If ____ starts, what makes it end?
- What would it take for ____ to happen now?
- What would prevent ____ from happening?

Contrastive features

- How is ____ different from things similar to it?
- How has ____ been different for me?

Variation

- How much can ____ change and still be itself?
- How is ____ changing?
- How much does ____ change from day to day?
- What are the different varieties of ____?

Distribution

- Where and when does ____ take place?
- What is the larger thing of which ____ is a part?
- What is the function of ____ in this larger thing?

Cubing (considering a subject from six points of view)

1. *Describe* it (colors, shapes, sizes, etc.)
2. *Compare* it (What is it similar to?)
3. *Associate* it (What does it make you think of?)
4. *Analyze* it (Tell how it's made)
5. *Apply* it (What can you do with it? How can it be used?)
6. *Argue* for or against it

Source: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/673/02/>