

Common Topics

Use these categories as a way to focus specifically on certain aspects of your topic to the exclusion of others. Remember, you need to narrow your topic, and the Common Topics are an easy and effective way to do this.

Definition – What is the meaning of the subject? (For example, what is the meaning of abortion? Of drug testing? Of fetal cell implants?) Or what is the meaning of the key terms in the proposition?

Comparison – How does the situation disputed in our controversy compare to other similar (or dissimilar) situations? (For example, are teen parents the same as adult parents? Is hemp the same thing as marijuana?) How is this situation either alike or different?

Size – Is the controversy large or small, of little or great concern, affecting few or many people? (For example, how many people in the country have no health care? Is this an acceptable number?)

Cause & Effect – What is the cause of the problem? Or what is (or will be) the effect of one or another solution? (For example, does sex education cause teen promiscuity? Does logging cause the disappearance of the spotted owl?)

Possible and Impossible – Could the solutions that we or others suggest be enacted, or are they not feasible? (Is it possible to enforce laws against obscenity? Can we legislate morality?)

Testimony & Authority – What is the status of public opinion on this issue from those in positions of authority? (What do computer experts say about the importance of public access to the Internet? What do professional baseball players and owners say about salaries and ticket prices?)