

## Invention / Prewriting: Listing

Sometimes the best way to **get started** finding a topic or thinking of what to say about a topic is to make a **list** – and there are many lists to choose from.

1. List **nouns** – a column each of people, places, things, and ideas. Then pick one, and try focusing on it using freewriting, clustering, or another listing activity below.
2. Make a general list of all the things you want to say related to your topic – **arguments** you want to defend or refute, or **points** you want to make.
3. Use the **patterns of organization** (also called **rhetorical modes**) to generate lists about your topic.
  - a. If you are providing a **narrative**, list all the events in your story.
  - b. Make lists of the senses – see, hear, smell, taste, and touch – to provide **description**.
  - c. If you have two items, develop lists of their similarities and differences to create information for **comparison and contrast**.
  - d. If you are describing how to get somewhere or how to do something, think of all the steps in your **process**, focusing on each detail your reader needs to know.
  - e. If you have an event, problem, or issue to discuss, you probably also have **causes and effects** – reasons why the event, problem, or issue has occurred, and how the event, problem, or issue has impacted the world. List these as well.
  - f. A topic may also have reasons why it is a problem, or it may offer a solution to a problem. Think about and list all the **problems and solutions** related to your topic (these are often related to causes and effects).
  - g. Some time topics need to be explained or analyzed by looking at their component parts (**division**) or by looking at how they fit into different larger categories (**classification**). Make lists of all the parts to your topic, and all the different ways your topic can be classified.
  - h. Perhaps your topic can be shown to your reader using specific examples or instances, called **illustrations**. List all the examples or illustrations that may help your reader understand your topic.

**IMPORTANT:** After generating any list, take some time to **prioritize** them by putting a 1 next to the most important item, 2 next to the second most important item, and working down to the least important on your list. Setting priorities will help you organize how you want to discuss your topic.

**AND DON'T FORGET:** You can **use more than one list**. For example, you may make a **noun list** to find a topic, and then make a **list of illustrations** to define the topic, and then do a **list of problems and solutions** for your topic. You may need to return to the **illustrations list** to find examples of each problem, and you may need to do a **comparison and contrast** of different solutions to your topic. It can be that complex – but remember, the more lists you make, and the more you prioritize your lists, the more clearly you will see all the issues related to your topic, and the more clearly you can decide what you want to say, and what you need to leave out!