



## Understand What a Topic Is

Support is the collection of examples, facts, or evidence that show, explain, or prove your main point. Primary support consists of the major ideas that back up your main point, and secondary support explains (or provides details to back up) your primary support.

The statements may be true, but without good support, they are not convincing. If you sometimes get papers back with the comment “You need to support/develop your ideas,” the suggestions in this chapter will help you.

Writers sometimes confuse repetition with support. The same point repeated several times is not support. It is just repetition.

<b>REPETITION</b>	<b>The amount shown on my bill is incorrect.</b>
<b>NOT SUPPORT</b>	<b>It didn't cost that much. The total is wrong.</b>
<b>SUPPORT</b>	<b>The amount shown on my bill is incorrect. I ordered the bacon-cheeseburger plate, which is \$6.99 on the menu.</b>

As you develop support for your main point, make sure that it has these three features.

**TO WRITING ASSIGNMENT 3-1**

**TIP**

**Showing** involves providing visual details or other supporting observations.

**Explaining** involves offering specific examples, or illustrating aspects of the main point.

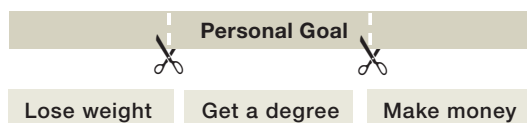
**Proving** involves providing specific evidence, sometimes from outside sources.



## Narrowing Your Topic

If your instructor assigns a general topic, it may at first seem uninteresting, unfamiliar, or too general. It is up to you to find a good, specific topic based on the general one. Whether the topic is your own or assigned, you next need to narrow and explore it. To narrow a general topic, focus on the smaller parts of it until you find one that is interesting and specific. There are many ways to narrow a topic:

### *Divide it into Smaller Categories*



### *Think of Specific Examples from Your Life*

- Web Sites:**
- Shopping Online (for what, and where?)
  - Music (what kind?)
  - My favorite sites (why do I like them?)

**GO TO PRACTICE 3-2**



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clustering  
pg 356

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### ▶ 3-1 WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Develop primary support points and supporting details using either your topic sentence or thesis statement from Chapter 3, your response to the idea journal prompt on p. 00, or one of the following topic sentences/thesis statements.

**Same-sex marriages hurt the institution of marriage. Or It's time to legalize same-sex marriages.**

**Companies expect too much of their employees.**

First decide how to support your point:

#### FOCUS

- Read your topic sentence or thesis statement.

#### ASK YOURSELF

- What do my readers need to know?
- What facts, details, or observations will help me show, explain, or prove my main point to readers?

#### WRITE

- Use a prewriting technique to generate possible support.

COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST ▶

### CHECKLIST

#### Evaluating your support

- It is related to my main point.
- It uses examples, facts, and observations that will make sense to my readers.
- It includes enough specific details to show my readers exactly what I mean.



### ▶ 3-2 PRACTICE: NARROWING A GENERAL TOPIC

Read the situation and two notes that follow and answer the questions.

1. How is the tone of the note to Ms. Farina different from the one to the roommate? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How do the different audiences affect the content and tone of the notes?

Example (Run-in parenthetical comment): \_\_\_\_\_

Detail: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which note has more detail? **the one to Ms. Farina** \_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
**the one to Ms. Farina** \_\_\_\_\_

4. What three words in the note to your roommate would have been edited had the note been to Ms. Farina? **overslept, couldn't, late** \_\_\_\_\_

5. The main idea of this essay is that
  - a. divorce is an evil act.
  - b. a successful marriage requires work and compromise.





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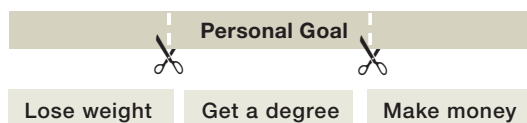


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