1. **Choosing a Topic.** What topics are of interest to you?

   - [ ] What is the purpose of your project?
   - [ ] Who is the intended audience?
   - [ ] Does this issue have a personal or geographic appeal?

### What is the purpose of your project?

- [ ] Writing to persuade
  
  **TIP:** If you are writing to persuade, be sure to use facts to support the argument you are making.

- [ ] Writing to inform
  
  **TIP:** If you are writing to inform, be sure to present both sides of the issue equally.

- [ ] Writing a speech
  
  **TIP:** If you are writing a speech, be sure to use language and information that appeals to your audience.

### Who is the intended audience?

- [ ] Peers
- [ ] Parents and teachers
- [ ] Other
- [ ] Community Members

**TIP:** Understanding the characteristics of your target audience can influence your topic choice. It’s important to present a topic that is meaningful and interesting to your audience.

### Does this issue have a personal or geographic appeal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does this issue relate to my personal life?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I know someone affected by this issue?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has it affected my community?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has it affected communities in other states or countries where my family or friends live?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TIP:** You may select a topic because it relates to your personal life, OR because you know someone else affected by this issue.

**THINK:** Is this a topic you have always wanted to know more about?
2. **Developing Basic Knowledge.** Read the topic overview to develop basic knowledge about the issue you have chosen. Answer a few basic questions to check for understanding.

(1) **Who is affected by the Leading Issue?**

(2) **What are the main controversies associated with the issue?**

(3) **Why is this issue important?**

(4) **Where is the focal point of the controversy?**

3. **Selecting a Focus.** Read the Essential Questions to understand the different issues related to the topic you have selected.

- **What issues, controversies and viewpoints related to your topic interest you the most?**

**TIP:** Select a focus that is both interesting to you and meets the guidelines of your research project. A specific approach to research will allow you to keep your research targeted, without being overwhelmed.
4. **Separating Fact from Opinion.** Read the essential questions, answers and related articles to understand the different viewpoints of the issue.

- What is the viewpoint favoring one side of the issue?

  Viewpoint 1:

  TIP: This viewpoint is the opinion of people or groups favoring one side of the issue. An opinion is what someone personally believes.

  Facts Supporting Viewpoint 1:
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 

  TIP: A fact is based on real occurrences and can be proven to be true.

- What is the alternative viewpoint of the issue?

  Viewpoint 2:

  TIP: This viewpoint is the opinion of people or groups that is opposite to Viewpoint 1. Remember, an opinion is what someone personally believes.

  Facts Supporting Viewpoint 2:
  1. 
  2. 
  3. 

  TIP: A fact is based on real occurrences and can be proven to be true.

**THINK:** Which viewpoint do you most strongly agree with? Circle your answer above.
5. **Forming Opinions.** With referral to the facts and opinions you identified, express your opinion on the issue.

- Copy one fact from your research. (This can be a fact from step 4.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fact:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIP:</strong> A fact is based on real occurrences and can be proven to be true.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- What opinion can you draw from the fact?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion: Based on this fact, I believe</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIP:</strong> It’s important to back up your personal beliefs with facts to make stronger, more valid arguments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Repeat the previous steps to form 2 more opinions related to the issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fact:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion:</strong> Based on this fact, I believe</td>
<td></td>
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<th>Fact:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opinion:</strong> Based on this fact, I believe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. **Evaluating Sources for Gathering Information.** As you conduct your research, it’s important to select sources of information that are most valid and reliable.

- **What sources can you use for obtaining background information?**
  - 
  -
  
  **TIP:** Check the article summary and source title to determine if there is relevant historical information in the article.

- **Write 2-3 expert opinions to support your research focus.**
  -
  -
  -
  
  **TIP:** Identifying the persons’ title and experience will help determine the person’s credibility when selecting quotes from authoritative figures.

- **List 2-3 sources you would expect to find balanced coverage of the issue.**
  -
  -
  -
  
  **TIP:** Balanced coverage means all sides of the issue are given equal and fair treatment. There is no evidence of bias or the author’s personal opinion.

- **List 2-3 sources you would expect to make arguments related to once side of the issue.**
  -
  -
  -
  
  **TIP:** Viewpoint articles typically argue one side of the issue. Be sure to evaluate the source type and credibility of the author making the argument.
7. **Supporting Evidence and Drawing Conclusions.** Continue to research to identify supporting evidence. (Including sources you identified in step 6.) Interpret the evidence and draw conclusions from the information you have collected to support your research.

- List 2 statistics to support your research focus. (May include link.)

  -
  
  -

  **TIP:** Statistical information includes data from charts, maps, graphs and polls. The data should clearly connect to the information presented in your research.

- What conclusions can you draw from these statistics?

  - Based on the statistic, I can conclude

  - Based on the statistic, I can conclude

  **TIP:** Use all information provided in the data set to evaluate statistics. Labels, keys and legends all are critical pieces of information necessary for drawing accurate conclusions.

- List information from a government document or primary source to support your research focus.

  -

  -

  **TIP:** Government documents and primary sources are good sources for legislation, laws and other reference material you can use as evidence.

- What conclusions can you draw from the selected government document or primary source?

  - Based on the government document/primary source, I can conclude

  - Based on the government document/primary source, I can conclude

  **TIP:** Use government documents and primary sources for information regarding historical information, important events and key figures related to the issue.
8. **Organizing information**
   Use the [Note Taking Tool](#) to organize your information.

   **TIP:** Insert information you have collected appropriately into the boxes provided. The main ideas and viewpoints should be inserted at the top levels. Supporting evidence should be inserted below the main ideas and viewpoints. The boxes can be moved, added and deleted to best organize your research.

9. **Applying knowledge**
   Synthesize the information you have collected and organized thus far to complete your project. If you are creating a PowerPoint or a Debate, these guides can be of further assistance to you:
   - Guide to Creating a PowerPoint Presentation
   - Guide to Creating a Debate Outline

   **TIP:** Check the assignment from your teacher to make sure you meet all the requirements for the project.

10. **Time Trackers**
    The following Time Trackers will help you organize your time and set benchmarks for your research tasks.
    - Assignment Calculator from [University of Minnesota](#)
    - Study Guides and Strategies from [University of St. Thomas](#)