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Choosing a Topic

About the Lesson

This is an essential lesson in the overall process of creating a personal essay. Students will select a topic that they know something about, one that can be presented in an interesting fashion. Many suggestions about topics are given, but any topic that really interests a student is acceptable. Every topic should have to do with the student and his or her experiences, notions, feelings, impressions, observations, reflections, desires or aspirations. Additional topics are given on the last page of the book.

Evaluating Responses

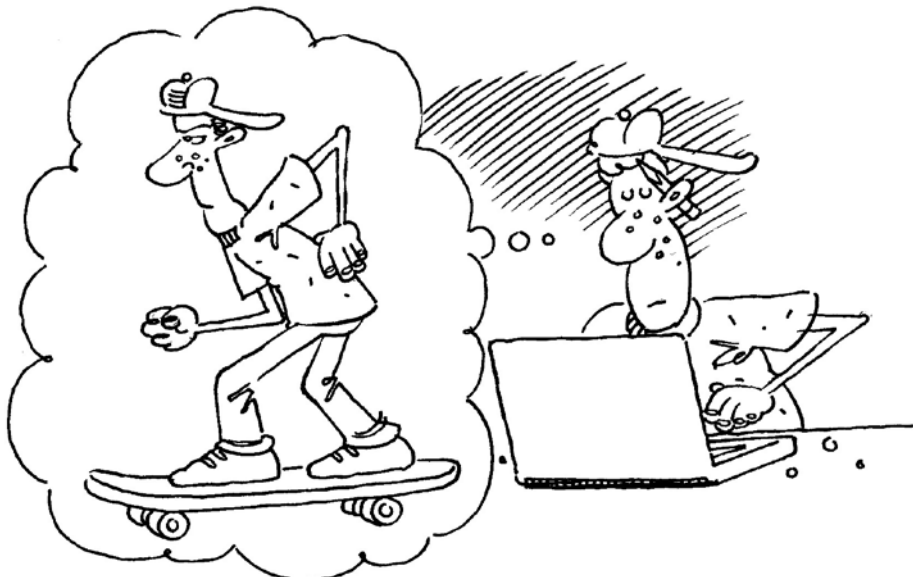
As long as a topic is in good taste, it should be acceptable. Read the choices made by your students, as revealed in their thesis statements, to make certain the topics are appropriate. The statements should contain the elements given in the lesson, namely:

1. It should be a simple, declarative sentence.
2. It should be as concise and straightforward as possible.
3. It should indicate the writer's approach to the topic.
4. It should set limits to the topic.
5. It should reflect the writer's way of approaching a particular audience.

Targeted Outcomes

Students will . . .

- choose a suitable topic for a personal essay.
- write a thesis statement for the essay.

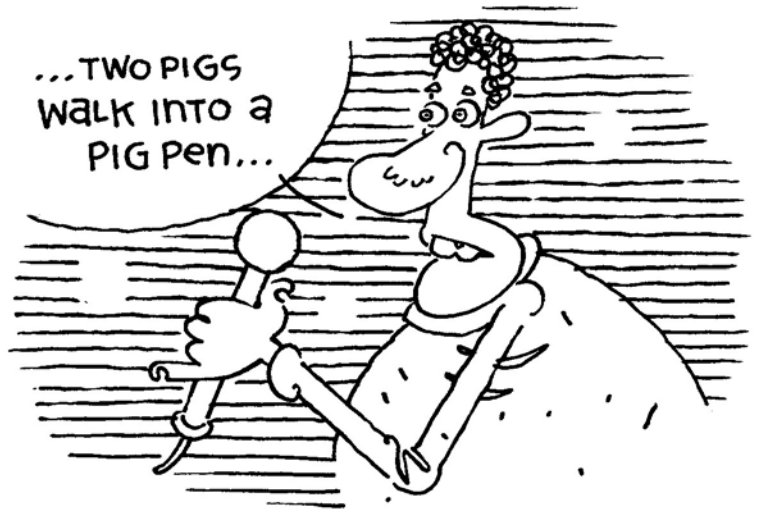


Choosing a Topic

A. When deciding on a topic to write about, you should first consider a number of topics that are manageable and are also meaningful to you. The topics must be suitable for your audience. It's unwise to choose a topic that is too broad. If you can only do a superficial job of explaining it to your audience, narrow it down.

For example, you might think of topics such as:

- the most hilarious comedian you've seen
- tips for budgeting time
- the greatest singer in the world
- the value of enduring friendships
- the evil of gossip
- the transient nature of style
- the trouble with siblings
- the advantages of wearing the "right" clothes
- the benefits of volunteering



B. Who will be your main audience when you write the essay?

List at least six suitable topics you might write about.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

Of these six, which three do you think will be the most interesting to your audience?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Which one of those topics do you know the most about, or which one appeals most to you?

Composing a Title

About the Lesson

We've devoted a lesson to titling an essay because we want to convey to students that a personal essay usually has a brief, straightforward title. Essayists usually don't try to do much with their titles except to give a strong indication of their subject matter. Accordingly, we advise your students to be brief and straightforward in titling their essays.

Evaluating Responses

Since the titles students compose for this lesson are tentative, all you need to do is ask them as a group if the titles they have composed are (1) brief and (2) a good indication of the topic. Occasionally an excellent essay will have a title of 10 or more words, but that is not common.

Targeted Outcome

Students will compose one or more tentative titles.

