

The WC|TS at Illinois Wesleyan Presents:
Trouble Getting Started? *Table It!*

Trying to decide what you want to write about? This method can help you narrow down your notions and find gaps in your writing.

Method One: A Personal Essay

What you want to do for this method is think about two (or more!) ideas for your personal story (usually required for a grad school application, a scholarship essay, or something more intimate so your readers can get to know you) and then lay out what works/ what doesn't about those ideas. Your table will look something like this one:

	Opening Style One	Opening Style Two	Example: Opening with a personal narrative for a grad school application
Pros to this style:	Here is where you'll include notes about what could be good about writing in this method.	Most openings are either personal narrative (tell a story) or lessons learned (tell about what you've learned from a series of experiences).	I can tell them a lot about me and who I am
Cons to this style:	Here is where you'll include notes about what might not be good about writing in this method.	Pro tip: Pick the style that has more pros than cons at least to start. See how far you get! You'll have many drafts.	They might not learn as much about who I hope to be; I'll have to make sure my story is relevant to my future career goals
Things I can include:	Details about the stories you want to include are relevant here.	Don't worry about trimming down the details at first. Just get them down.	That time I helped my mentee explore a new style of writing to become a stronger writer in English courses
Notes from the prompt:	Here is where you'll need to read carefully what the place you're writing for has asked you to do.	Think about career, academic, and professional goals—mind the CAP.	Make sure to talk about personal as well as professional goals. (So I want to make sure to connect it to what I hope to do after I graduate, too.)

Notes:	Is there anything you want to remind yourself of as you write?	Jot it down here.	Don't try to edit as I write; wait until I'm done to see how my story develops
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Method Two: *An analytical or Argumentative Essay*

What you want to do for this method is think about two (or more!) ideas for your paper and then lay out what works/ what doesn't about those ideas. You can also list resources you might use and thesis statements you might create. Your table will look something like this one:

	Paper Idea #1	Paper Idea #2	Example: Gun control laws need reform
Working Thesis Statement Ideas:	Here is where you drop in ideas for a rough thesis statement.	This part will develop over time.	Gun control laws need reform because there are too many mass- casualty events.
Resources I can Use to Support my Claims:	Here is where you can hyperlink your e-resources and copy down the names of your print ones.	This part becomes your references page	Books from the library Recent gov't publications
Opposing / Different Views:	Here is where you need to acknowledge weaknesses in your argument/ other views.	Sometimes, in an analytical paper, you'll just need to include what others might notice about the issue.	Gun control is fine as it is. We need better mental health services. We need to limit some types of guns but not others.
Notes from the Professor's Prompt:	You want to make sure to note down any specifics your professor provides.	You should also write any questions you have about their prompt.	Need to make sure to cite my sources in APA
What other research do I still need to do?	Here is where you need to include gaps in your study.	What else do you need to know to write a good paper?	Need to focus on a specific area. Should I look at a state? A country? What have other places done?

Questions? Come see a writing center tutor. You can sign up for an appointment online at iwu.mywconline.com and meet with them in-person or online.