

I Do Not Know Where to Begin

Read over all the documents and take notes where necessary. From concept to analysis you need to read and understand your subject.

What if you do not yet have a subject? Choose 3 topics you like. In each topic, choose 3-5 subtopics. For example, Topic 1 is environment; subtopics are organic food, use of pesticide, plastic bags and recycling, and sushi. Let's say you choose organic food. What kind of information do you need? Definition, evaluation of literature, focus in organic food—for extended examples, etc. Next, you come across a great article, "[The Ecology of Pizza \(Or Why Organic Food is a Bargain\)](#)" in June/July 2006 of Mother Earth News By Sandra Steingraber. Print or check it out, along with any other information you may find.

I'd advise printing out the documents or making copies of books because we read better and retain more information when we're not tied to computer screen or inhibited from not wanting to destroy public property. Also, you're more likely to underline and make notations on a document.

Develop and use a writing plan, like an outline, a cluster or other means to organize your thoughts toward the purpose of the writing (to persuade, to sell, to inform, etc.)

I'd suggest that you plan on writing at least two drafts--if not three or four. Your first draft should be a mess--get all your ideas down and don't worry about any of the formalities of the assignment (i.e. organization, tone, style, etc). Your ideas are the back-bone of this assignment--if you censor yourself when drafting, you may end up with a weaker document in the long run. On your subsequent drafts, you can work on organization, tone, style, ethos, pathos, and logos--information is easy to shape once you see it on the page.

Incidentally, this idea was summed up quite nicely by author E.M Forester ([Howards End](#), [A Room with a View](#), [Passage to India](#), etc) when he said "How do I know what to think until I see what I say?"

Try it on for size.