

How to Think of More to Say

This list helps you think of more to write when your work is too short or you are just stuck.

1. Look again at your **topic or purpose**. Go back to the thinking stage.
2. You can also check that you really do **understand the point of the topic**. Misunderstanding the topic can make it really hard to write well, so just check again so you know what you're really supposed to do in your writing. If you made your own topic, reconsider it: is it too broad, too narrow, or simply too hard? Make a new one.
3. **Check the scope** of your topic, purpose, or main idea. If it's too broad or too narrow, that might be the cause of your trouble. Try making your main idea either broader or more focused. If you're planning to write a long story, maybe it's better to just write one scene first.
4. Try **talking about your ideas** with a friend or family member. This person might say something that gives you new ideas. You can also try looking up your idea online.
5. Put your work aside for awhile and **go do something** active or relaxing. Return to your work with a fresh mind later.
6. **Pretend you are a stranger** who has no knowledge of the writing topic. Play stupid and **come up with questions** that this stranger might ask. See if the answers to some of those questions would fit into your writing.
7. **Pretend you are a reader** with only a little bit of knowledge about your topic. **Come up with intelligent questions** that this reader may ask. Try to start the questions with "Why" or "How." See if the answers to those questions would fit into your writing.
8. Think about your topic and how you **used to** understand it when you were younger or before you had certain experiences, information, or lessons. Write about how your understanding used to be and how that's different from the way it is now. You can take this a step further and say how the difference in understanding now is good, helpful, etc., or not, and why.
9. If you're writing about facts or opinions, look at the **quality of your explanations and examples**. You can often write a lot more by being more specific. For instance, if your examples are about people, are they about real, specific people, with names? If not, try rewriting that part. Look also at the quality of your explanations. Do you have some parts where you describe an "if" situation? Is this description precise, so precise that a movie director could create it without asking you to elaborate? If not, try adding visual details and dialogue to your description.
10. If you're writing about facts or opinions, check on the **quantity of your examples**: how many do you have? Is it enough? If you were somebody who doubted or

disagreed with the idea in your writing, would you be convinced by these examples? If not, you might want to include more.

11. Think about how people might misunderstand or oversimplify your idea, and spend time **clearing up these potential misunderstandings**. You might start with a phrase like “Some people hear (idea) and think that...but...” or “You might assume that...but...” or “People often think of (idea) when they hear (other idea), but...” etc.

12. If you're writing about an opinion, check to see if you've focused on only one side of the issue. If so, try **considering one or more other sides**. You don't have to change your opinion when you do this—just explain what other people might think and why, and discuss why you disagree with that. Instead of just disagreeing, you can also explain why you partially agree (you can **modify** the alternate idea that you bring up), or you can actually **concede** the point, which means you acknowledge that the alternate idea is true or can be true in certain situations, and then you go on to talk about why your own point still stands in spite of this.

13. If you already have raised one or more points to refute, modify, or concede, go back and spend more time **describing other people's different ideas**. Have you represented them fully, with reasons? Try to get your representation of those ideas to be so fair and detailed that the people holding them would think “Gee, that's exactly how I wish I could have said that!” Check on the quality of your points of refutation, modification, and/or concession, too. Have you really responded to others' ideas and not just repeated your own points?

14. If you're writing a story, poem, or other imaginative piece, **look at the detail level of your work**. Have you shown exactly what your characters said? Have you used details about the setting to create up a good visual backdrop in which readers can imagine your ideas? Have you shown your characters' thoughts, through internal monologue (what they are thinking inside their heads), through their movements, or both? If not, or if you only did this a little, try to add to it.

15. **Look at examples of published pieces of writing** similar to what you are working on. Scan for the nicest, fullest paragraphs or the most interesting, detailed bits. How did those authors do it? Figure out what their strategies are, and borrow them.

16. Think about the content of your writing: is it mostly facts or mostly opinion? **If it's mostly facts, try adding some opinions**, if that seems to be appropriate for your writing goal. **Or vice versa**: if your writing is mostly opinion, try adding some facts. If you don't know any, then do some research. (Don't be lazy!!)

Here are some sentence starters for adding your opinion:

- I think...
- I believe...
- I feel...
- The most important part of this is...

private
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- The best part of this is...
- The worst part of this is...
- It's hard to make up my mind about this, because...
- I like...
- I appreciate...
- I dislike...
- This reminds me of...
- This is better than...
- This is worse than...
- If it were up to me, I would...
- If I were (somebody), I would...

I bet you have your own creative ideas for adding more to your writing! Message them to me (Liesl@HiloTutor.com) to include on this list.

A final piece of advice: If you get stuck, find a way to get UNstuck. Keep trying!