

# Topic Exploration & Selection Teacher Guide

nerdylittlebirdie.com

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## Step 1 - Create a list of topics your teen is interested in

- A. Webpages with topic ideas: [Easy Essay Topics](#), [High School Argument Topics](#), [Challenging argument topics](#), [Funny argument essay topics](#), [100 Easy Essay Topics with Research Links](#), [100 More Argument Essay Topics](#), [KQED education site](#), [New York Times Student Writing Prompts](#)
- **Share** these links with student.
  - **Model the process first.** If you're working with argumentative essays, find a seemingly "un-argumentative" prompt and show how you can tweak the statement into a position that could be argued. For example, "Why do people watch funny cat videos?" That sounds like an informational essay, not argumentative. But can you argue a position about cat videos? Maybe, maybe not. People should watch three funny cat videos a day at work. That's a stand. The next logical step is to ask why? Can you think of at least 2 reasons you could potentially support such a statement? This will model selecting points & particulars. Cat videos & laughter's effect on the brain. (There must be positive work-related effects there.) Cuteness generates what in humans? Nurturing, possibly? Let them see how to switch a difficult prompt into an argumentative stance where you can form a potential thesis. And it's okay to practice with a tongue-in-cheek idea, like cat videos improving work in environments. After you model one, have them select an easy prompt and you guys practice together: take a stand, brainstorm one or two arguable points in support of your stance.
  - **Student selects interesting prompts.** Copy/paste interesting prompts into a Word doc. Do this for about 15 minutes. They should select about a dozen. Tell them to copy over \*any\* that pique their interest, whether they think it's an argumentative/persuasive prompt or not. Together you will look over them & evaluate whether they could make an interesting argumentative/persuasive paper or if the prompt would fit under another type of essay. Maybe compare/contrast, informational, opinion, process analysis, etc.
  - **Highlight their top 3 prompts.** The ones they find most interesting, know a lot about, or are most passionate about.
  - **Select one for a topic.** On a scale of 1 to 10, they should care at least a 6 about their chosen topic.

- Another option is to look at their list of 10 interest topics from the “Arguments” chapter in H4HS instead of going through the above websites.

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## **More options to facilitate the topic selection process, if needed.**

(Use one or as many as you need)

1. **Do Topic Funnel**, if needed, to narrow down from a big topic idea to something narrow enough for an essay. (TWJ chapter 6 )
2. **BIG TIP! TURN IT INTO QUESTIONS!** If the topic is one word (i.e. video gaming), write out a series of interesting questions about the topic. How many different ways can you frame questions around a topic? What question(s) do you want to answer about your topic? Brainstorm lots of questions. The questions may come in handy for writing a thesis statement and helping direct research, so **save them!** Once you’ve brainstormed questions, identify the most interesting one(s). Some resources to help with this question-creating process...
  - A. H4HS “What is an Essay” chapter. Pages 82, 84-85 for more questions
  - B. Do steps 1 & 2 only in [this web page](#).
  - C. Do steps 1 & 2 only in [the video found on this webpage](#).
3. **Big, juicy conversation** while the parent takes notes.
4. If your teen doesn’t know what to do, **model the process**. They don’t understand a topic funnel? Model one on a topic that interests you. Or partner with them on their topic. Collaborate!