OPTION 1: Researching an issue that connects to your own life. Read ALL steps 1-4 before you begin.
1. Freewrite on one of the topics below. In your writing, focus on analyzing your experience as much as retelling it—what caused it? What effects did it have? Was it ultimately a success, or a failure, or a mix? What did you learn from it?
   • A significant challenge or obstacle that you faced in your life, and how you dealt with it.
   • A time when you experienced being treated differently because of your racial, gender, age, religion, ethnic, or other difference.
   • An experience that caused you to question, doubt, or reject a belief, rule, practice, authority figure, institution, etc. Examples: a religious, political, or aesthetic belief/value, a commonly accepted way of doing things in sports, work, religion, home life, etc. or a religious, political, sports, entertainment, or other figure.
2. Think about your experience (or a new one if you want), and list 5-7 questions you’d like answers to in order to understand it better or deal with it better. Focus on questions that a scientist, psychologist, biologist, journalist, or other “expert” might look at or have answers to—causes, effects, solutions/cures, background data, etc. Your goal is to find questions that can guide you through a research process that will provide material you can use in a persuasive paper to a specific audience.
3. Combine your narrative with your research on a related topic. The focus of this paper is primarily on the research, not on the narrative, but feel free to weave your own personal examples throughout your paper. Most of your paper will focus on #2 above. Make sure you include a clear thesis statement in your essay that makes a point about your topic.

(acknowledgment to Paul Hawkwood)

OPTION 2: Arguing for a position
Think of an issue or controversy that you find interesting and that is of real concern for you. Take a clear position on this issue and present evidence that supports this point of view.

1. Choose a topic:
   • Make sure the topic you choose has two arguable sides and is a reasonable argument
   • Focus and define your issue. This is only a 3½ -5 page essay! It’s difficult to handle an issue like gun control, for example, for this type of essay. Narrow your topic and say more about less.
   • Please, please, please try to find a more unique and fresh topic. Consider a topic that you are personally connected to or have some experience with. Try to avoid the “old chestnuts” like legalizing marijuana, abortion, etc.
   • “Choose a subject that allows for the possibility of persuading your reader. Avoid emotionally charged subjects that resist logical examination” (George Miller, The Prentice Hall Reader). In other words, it might be best to stay away from values arguments like gay marriage.

2. Develop your argument:
   • Consider your audience: Do they know much about your topic? How will they feel about
it? Will they be impartial or prejudiced?

- **Make a list** of the evidence or reasons you will use in your argument. Which pieces of evidence will help you present the stronger argument?

- **Make sure you include a clear thesis statement in your essay that makes a point about your topic.**

- **Argue with solid, reasonable, fair, and relevant evidence.** Express your feelings honestly, but avoid anything that is distorted, inaccurate, or inflammatory.

- **What objections** or counterarguments might your audience have? Respond to those somewhere in your essay.

(From *The Bedford Guide for College Writers*, Kennedy, Kennedy, Holladay, 2002, p.130)

3. **Decide how to structure your essay. Here’s one way:**

1. Introduce the subject to gain the readers’ interest.
2. State your main point or thesis.
3. If useful, give the historical background or an explanatory overview of the situation.
4. Provide evidence to support your position (in several paragraphs, with each paragraph developing one reason to support your claim/your thesis).
5. Refute the opposition.
6. Reaffirm your main point.

(From *The Bedford Guide for College Writers*, Kennedy, Kennedy, Holladay, 2002, p.130)

Here’s another way:

1. Paragraph 1: Write an introduction that engages your reader in the topic and includes a thesis statement on the point you are arguing.
2. Paragraph 2: Write a topic sentence that states one reason to support your thesis. Develop your paragraph with examples and specific details.
3. Paragraph 3: Write a topic sentence that provides a transition from paragraph 2 and states a second reason to support your thesis. Develop your paragraph with examples and specific details.
4. Paragraphs 4-? Each subsequent paragraph should develop another reason to support your thesis. **Somewhere in here, include a paragraph that also explores, acknowledges, and/or refutes the opposing side.**
5. Ending paragraph: Write a conclusion

**Guidelines:**

- **Begin** in a way that draws the reader in and makes them want to keep reading. Include a clear thesis statement somewhere in the beginning of your essay.

- **Make sure you include a clear thesis statement in your essay that makes a point about your topic.**

- **“End forcefully.** Conclusions are what listeners and readers are most likely to remember. Repeat or restate your position. Drive home the importance of your argument” (George Miller, *The Prentice Hall Reader*)

- **Use and acknowledge at least two or three authoritative sources.** At least one source must NOT be from the Internet. Use the MLA documentation style for in-text citations and citations on your Works Cited page. **YOU MUST MAKE COPIES OF THE SOURCES YOU CITE AND INCLUDE THESE COPIES WITH YOUR SECOND AND FINAL DRAFTS.** Please highlight the sections you cite in your essay. **I will not grade your essay without these photocopies AND a Works Cited page.**

- **Format:** 3 ½ -5 pages (minimum 1000 words), Times New Roman, 12 font, numbered pages (preferably upper right with last name and page number)
Checklist for Essay #4

Write your thesis statement here (copied directly from your paper):
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Please include the following with your final draft (You may lose points for missing items):

_____ 1. Prewriting and proposal

_____ 2. Outline (See pp. 524-525 in the LB Brief for a sample outline)

_____ 3. First draft

_____ 4. Peer responses

_____ 5. Final draft (with word count below heading) Please remember to: use Times New roman, 12 font, 1 inch margins, and NUMBER YOUR PAGES, starting on page 1 (preferably in the upper right-hand corner with your name preceding the number).

_____ 6. Your (typed) answers to the following questions (Please put on a separate sheet):

1. What was your overall goal when revising this essay?
2. Explain what you have changed (from the first draft to the final draft) and why you made these changes.
3. Explain what you have not changed. Why did you not change those parts?
4. What feedback (from Writing Desk, peer reviews, family members, friends, conferences with me, etc) influenced your revisions?
5. How did class activities or multiple drafting influence your revision (s)?
6. What do you think is especially good about this essay?
7. What did you ultimately learn from revising this essay?

You were asked to draw upon a couple outside sources to support your thesis. Please cite these sources using MLA format:

1. Wherever you have cited these sources in your paper, use an in-text citation. Look at the sample essay on pp.526-530 in the LB Brief and note how that writer incorporated and acknowledged outside sources in his paper. If you mention the author of your source in the text of your paper, you only need to put the page number in parentheses {Example: (42)} at the end of your sentence. If you don’t mention the author in your paper, you will have to put his or her last name in your in-text citation {Example: (Vogel 42)}. If you interviewed people, just mention their names in the text of your paper.

2. Create a “Works Cited” page to list all the sources you used. A sample Works Cited page is on p. 530 in the LB Brief. I will not grade your paper unless it has a Works Cited page and photocopies of all outside sources.

3. Consult pp. 483-520 in the LB Brief MLA citations (for books, periodicals, online sources, interviews, etc.).