

Subjects for writing

Frequently your subject will be given to you. In a psychology class, for example, you might be asked to explain Bruno Bettelheim's Freudian analysis of fairy tales. Or in a course on the history of filmmaking, you might be assigned an essay on the political impact of D. W. Griffith's silent film *The Birth of a Nation*. In the business world, your assignment might be to draft a quarterly sales report or craft a diplomatic letter to a customer who has complained about your firm's computer software.

Sometimes you will be free to choose your own subject. Then you will be wise to select a subject that you already know something about or one that you can reasonably investigate in the time you have. Students in composition classes have written successfully on all of the subjects listed here, most of which were later narrowed into topics suitable for essays of 500 to 750 words. Browsing through the lists may help you pick up some ideas of your own.

Many of the subjects listed below are too broad. Part of your challenge as a writer will be whittling broad subjects down to manageable topics. If you are limited to a few pages, for example, you could not possibly do justice to a subject as broad as "sports for the handicapped." You would be wise to restrict your paper to a topic more manageable in the space allowed — perhaps a description of the Saturday morning athletic program your college offers for handicapped children.

Education

- computers in the classroom
- an inspiring teacher
- sex education in junior high school
- magnet schools
- a learning disability such as dyslexia
- programmed instruction
- parochial schools
- teacher certification
- a local program to combat adult illiteracy
- creative means of funding a college education

Careers and the workplace

- working in an emergency room
- the image versus the reality of a job such as lifeguarding
- a police officer's workday
- advantages of flextime for workers and employers
- company-sponsored day care
- mandatory drug testing by employers
- sex or racial discrimination on the job
- the psychological effects of unemployment
- the rewards of a part-time job such as camp counseling
- e-mail privacy issues

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Families

an experience with adoption
a portrait of a family member who has aged well
the challenges facing single parents
living with an alcoholic
a portrait of an ideal parent
growing up in a large family
the problems of split custody
an experience with child abuse
the depiction of parent-child relationships in a popular TV series
expectations versus the reality of marriage
overcoming sibling rivalry
the advantages or disadvantages of being a twin
overseeing a child's access to the World Wide Web

Health

a vegetarian diet
weight loss through hypnosis
a fitness program for the elderly
reasons not to smoke
the rights of smokers or nonsmokers
overcoming an addiction
Prozac as a treatment for depression
the side effects of a particular treatment for cancer
life as a diabetic
the benefits of an aerobic exercise such as swimming
caring for a person with AIDS

Sports and hobbies

an unusual sport such as free-fall parachuting or bungee jumping
surviving a wilderness program
bodybuilding
a sport from another culture
the philosophy of karate
the language of sports announcers
pros and cons of banning boxing
coaching a Little League team
cutting the costs of an expensive sport such as skiing
a portrait of a favorite sports figure
sports for the handicapped
the discipline required for a sport such as gymnastics
the rewards of a hobby such as woodworking
salary caps for professional athletes

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The arts

working behind the scenes at a theater
censorship of rock-and-roll lyrics
photography as an art form
the Japanese tea ceremony
the influence of African art on Picasso
the appeal of a local art museum
a portrait of a favorite musician or artist
performing as a musician
a high school for the arts
the colorization of black-and-white films
science fiction as a serious form of literature
a humorous description of romance novels or hard-boiled detective thrillers

Social justice

an experience with racism or sexism
affirmative action
reverse discrimination
making public transportation accessible for the physically handicapped
an experience as a juror
a local program to aid the homeless
discrimination against homosexuals
pros and cons of a national drinking age of twenty-one

Death and dying

working on a suicide hotline
the death of a loved one
a brush with death
caring for terminally ill patients
assisted suicide
the Buddhist view of death
explaining death to a child
passive euthanasia
death with dignity
an out-of-body experience

Violence and crime

an experience with a gun
a wartime experience
violence on television news programs
visiting a friend in prison
alternative sentencing for first offenders
victims' rights
a successful program to eliminate violence in a public high school
Internet fraud
capital punishment
preventing terrorist attacks
domestic violence and the courts

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Nature and ecology

safety of nuclear power plants
solar energy
wind energy
air pollution in the national parks
forest fires on the California coast
grizzly bears in Yellowstone
communication among dolphins
organic gardening
backpacking in the Rockies
marine ecology
cleaning up Boston Harbor
the preservation of beaches in Delaware

Science and technology

pros and cons of writing on a computer
genetic engineering
an experimental farming technique
a medical breakthrough
free speech and the Internet