

ARISTOTLE'S TOPICS

1. Name your topic.
2. DEFINITION: What is the nature of X? To what general category does X belong? What is X's function?
3. COMPARISON AND CONTRAST: What can you compare X to? What can you contrast X with?
4. CAUSE AND EFFECT: What are some of the possible causes or antecedents of X? What will be the effects or consequences of X?
5. SUPPORT FROM EVIDENCE: What expert opinions do you have on X? What relevant research exists on X?

TAGMEMICS

1. Name your topic.
2. PARTICLE: (a self-contained X) What is X? How would you define X? How would you describe X? What are X's characteristics?
3. WAVE: (an X that changes over time) What is the history of X? What was X like in the past? In what ways is X different now? Are changes in X happening quickly or slowly? What are the effects of X's changes on X?
4. FIELD: (An X that is part of a larger context) How is X similar to Y? How is X different from Y? How does X fit into/be a part of/be important to Y?

EXAMPLE

1. Topic: Atascadero
2. Particle: -sleepy rural community -lies just north of San Luis Obispo -pop. 23,000, golf course, zoo, parks, no shopping
3. Wave: -started as a small Mennonite settlement around the turn of the century, conservative religious community—growing larger due to the proximity of Cal Poly, Diablo Canyon and various penal institutions -grown relatively slowly, but still conservative -home to many families from large cities especially in the last 10-15 yrs.

4. Field: -Atascadero is like a big city only in that it has McDonald's and Lucky -it is different in size, safety, lack of variety, cost of living -people from the big city go there to find cheaper, safer housing, more land

SYNECTICS

1. Name your topic.
2. Personal analogy (imagine you are the topic or the solution to a problem)
3. Direct analogy (compare it with something concrete)
4. Symbolic analogy (compare it to an abstract principle)
5. Fantasy analogy (something surprising)

EXAMPLE

1. Topic: Greenhouse effect as it relates to Canada
2. Personal Analogy (if it were me): The greenhouse effect on the earth is like the effect of a rising fever on my body--it changes my "climate" and the way I respond to things.
3. Direct Analogy (concrete): The warming up of the earth has already been made into a direct analogy by scientists—the greenhouse.
4. Symbolic Analogy (abstract): It's like an exponential equation in math--the kind that curves up on a graph, with a higher slope the longer it lasts (the longer we don't do anything about it, the faster it will get worse).
5. Fantasy analogy (something surprising): The warming effect is like a giant fire-breathing dragon toasting the earth (would have to be worked out more carefully if used beyond prewriting).

Source: <http://www.writer.yorku.ca/strategies/intro.html>