

LUC WRITING CENTER – “HOW TO WRITE A TOPIC PROPOSAL”

Before or after reading this guide to writing a **topic proposal**, make sure to fill out the [“Topic Proposal Worksheet”](#) located on the “Writing an Essay from A to Z” page. The first draft of a topic proposal that you formulate on that sheet will help you 1) Establish the wider context of your issue, 2) explain the scholastic or professional perspectives of experts on the subject under discussion, 3) isolate any problems with prevailing viewpoints on the subject, and then 4) state your thesis, which usually explains exactly how the reader should change their opinion on the subject, and why.

The Topic Proposal is An Overview of Your Project and Conclusions: Think of the topic proposal as part “road map to your essay structure” and part “overview of your argument.” *Essentially, a topic proposal does the work of your intro paragraph and abstract for a longer essay, by explaining the background of a topic, briefly stating what other experts have said on the subject or what is generally thought about an issue, then explaining that these perspectives are wrong or imperfect, and finally, advancing an argument that will change how your reader thinks, and possibly acts, concerning this topic.* Plan to subject your topic proposal to several drafts for content, structure, and grammar/punctuation before submitting it to your teacher for grading or approval.

Explain The Logical Research Process That Resulted in Your Thesis: If you are supporting your thesis, advocating new perspectives or actions, based on research you’ve done in a historical or literary archive or a groundbreaking scientific study you have conducted or collaborated on, you need to briefly list the names of the records you consulted or methodologies you used. An important part of research is explaining the process by which you have arrived at your conclusion (thesis), enabling other researchers to either replicate your results using your methodologies or find the materials you have consulted to make their own, hopefully similar, interpretation of the words or data.

Quoting: *In the topic proposal, as in the intro paragraph and abstract, there is no need for quotes or specific quotes by critics.* All that actual “proof” will appear in the body of your paper, not in your intro or conclusion paragraphs and definitely not in your topic paragraph. You can mention the names of methodologies, research resources, and/or the names of critics and scholars in your topic proposal, but don’t give too much away yet. The point is to write sentences summarizing, not proving the logical steps of your argument. Proof comes later on, in the body paragraphs of your actual paper!

Your Paper May Eventually Deviate from the Topic Proposal: When you write this topic proposal, you are obviously “proposing a topic” to your teacher and haven’t written the paper yet. Remember that some parts of your argument might change in the course of writing the essay. Don’t worry! Deviating from the topic proposal is extremely common, a sign that you, like a good researcher and writer, are going where your research and findings take you in an attempt to make things crystal-clear to the reader.