

This worksheet will help you to articulate all of your emerging ideas and shape those ideas into a thesis statement. This is a good exercise to try if you've spent a lot of time on invention (fact/idea lists, freewriting, etc.) but still haven't arrived at a thesis that fully satisfies you.

## *Points-To-Make List*

Brainstorming is just the first step toward generating an interesting, well-argued essay. Before you begin to write your essay, spend some time making a list of your ideas and reviewing them. Afterwards, try using those ideas to generate your argument.

1. Without looking at the assignment sheet, write down your understanding of what the prompt is asking you to do and *why* the instructor has asked you to think about these issues/topics.

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2. Check your understanding against the actual prompt. Have you misunderstood any aspect of the assignment? Forgotten to address one of the prompt's explicit or implicit questions? Don't rush through this step. If the professor has given you a list of tips and reminders along with the actual prompt, take the time now to review those.
3. Create a preliminary list of the points you're considering in relation to this prompt. Don't worry for now if you have a lot of different ideas. Just make a list of the examples that you'd like to discuss, the questions you'd like to raise, the counterarguments you'd like to address, the implications you'd like to explore, and so forth. These points can be in any order.

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4. Review your list, decide which points you like best, and put check marks beside them.
5. Look over your list and try to shape your best points into a rough thesis statement. Don't worry about creating a thesis that encompasses *all* of the points you've just listed. Instead, aim for a thesis that allows you to focus on some or all of the points you've annotated with a check mark. At the same time, be sure you're still addressing the prompt – refer to your notes from questions #1 and #2.
6. Now that you have a provisional thesis, draw a line through all the points that – however promising – no longer seem to fit. This may mean you're eliminating a lot of ideas; alternatively, you may let go of one or two points that you were particularly eager to make. Writing involves making choices, including the tough choice to sideline ideas that, however promising, do not fit into an emerging pattern.