

Inventing and Organizing Your Argument

Sometimes, it is difficult to figure out where to go with your argument. Aristotle in the *Ars Rhetorica* lists several *inventiones*. Each *Inventio*, or "invention technique," can help a writer generate ideas while brainstorming. Frequently, these tools can help you think about an issue and possibly develop individual paragraphs. Be warned that these techniques are not a panacea. Some work better than others in specific essays and arguments. For instance, in discussing whether or not healthcare should pay for a myofacial massage, it may be important to define what exactly a myofacial massage is and how particular HMOs categorize it. On the other hand, when writing an essay on automobiles, it seems unlikely one would need to define the word "car" for a reader. Use your best judgment.

TECHNIQUE

Narration	How did it happen?
Description	How can it be described?
Process	How is it made? How is it done? How do you do it?
Cause	What causes it?
Effect	What effect does it have on other things?
Compare	How is it similar to something else?
Contrast	How it different than something else?
Classification	Is it a part of a larger group? What group is that?
Division	Can it be broken down into smaller groups? What groups are those?
Formal definition	How does an authoritative source define it, such as a Penal Code, Black's Law Dictionary, a Biochemistry Guide, etc.?
Etymology	Where does the word come from? Does that knowledge help understand the problem? (If not, don't bother!)
Example	What are some examples of it?
Exposition	Simply explain it in your own words
Negative Definition	What is it <u>not</u> ?
History	Can you give me a history of it?
Diagram	Can you draw a diagram showing how it works?
Anecdote	Can you tell me a short story to explain it?
Possible/impossible	Could it work? Did it work? Does it work? Why or why not?

REMEMBER:

These techniques are the means to an end, not a purpose in themselves. In most situations, you would never be asked to write "a paper using classification," but you might find yourself needing to write a report to someone and then discover that classification would be a good way to organize part of that paper, or it might be useful to help the reader understand part of your argument.