# Getting Started & Expanding Ideas

If you are having trouble getting started on an essay, you could choose a topic that interests you and then explore that topic by choosing some of the critical thinking questions (below). These questions can also help you expand your ideas and lengthen your paper.

- **For argumentative research papers** these questions can help you elaborate on the context of the issue. You might consider exploring some of the questions in your introduction or conclusion. Additionally, you might contrast what others have said about the topic with your own claim.

- **For analytical writing** these questions can help you expand your knowledge or narrow your focus. Since analytical writing involved making positive and negative evaluations, you can focus on questions that analyze the context or ideas of others.

- **For reflection essays** these questions can help you consider how your personal understanding of a topic has changed or deepened. You might also explore the practical applications of a reading.

- **For your Capstone Essay** you might focus on answering questions about why the current social justice issue exists and the real world application.

## Critical Thinking Questions
Not all of these questions will apply to every assignment.

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| **Who** | … benefits from this? <br> … is harmed by this? <br> … is most directly affected? | … are the key people discussing this? <br> … has the power to make decisions about this? <br> … are the key researchers looking into this? |
| **What** | … is another perspective? <br> … is an alternative? <br> … can we do to make a positive change? <br> … factors are contributing to this? <br> … is getting in the way of action? | … is the best/worst case scenario? <br> … are the strengths/weaknesses of this? <br> … is the most/least important? <br> … factors could make this worse/better? <br> … is a counterargument to this? |
| **Why** | … is this relevant to others? <br> … has this been this way for so long? <br> … is there a need for this today? | … should people be educated about this? <br> … have we allowed this to happen? <br> … isn't there consensus about the issue? |
| **How** | … should we approach this? <br> … could this benefit us? <br> … can we change this for the good? | … have we allowed this to happen? <br> … is this similar to other situations? <br> … does this differ from other situations? |
| **When** | … will we know we've been successful? <br> … can we expect this to change? | … has this played a part in our history? <br> … is the best time to take action? |
| **Where** | … will this idea take us? <br> … is there the most need for this? <br> … are the regions most affected by this? | … are there similar situations? <br> … has positive change already happened? <br> … can I find more information about this? |

*Table adapted from Global Digital Citizen Foundation.*

Some might be questions that you can ask yourself to clarify your own stance/beliefs on the topic. For others, you might need to do some research to answer them.