

# Ideas

Ideas are the heart of the message. They reflect the purpose, the theme, the primary content, the main point, or the main story line of the piece. When ideas are strong, the writing is rich with detail, original and thoughtful, highly focused and clear, and substantive. In other words, it says something; it doesn't just meander or list ideas randomly. It doesn't bore the reader with trivia, repetition, or unnecessary information.

## 1 Just beginning

- ☐ Someone else who reads my paper might have trouble figuring out what I'm trying to say.
- ☐ I might not know enough yet about this topic to write.
- ☐ My details are vague: "It was fun and stuff."
- ☐ I'm still thinking on paper. I'm looking for an idea.
- ☐ I'm not sure what my topic is ... OR... maybe my topic is too big: "All about Earth."

## 3 On my way - - Ready for serious revision

- ☐ A reader would understand my MAIN idea. I could use more information, though. Also, I need to get choosy and toss out details that do not matter.
- ☐ Some details are important and interesting: "She always wore non-matching socks." "The clouds were the color of tarnished pewter." Other details are too general or are things everyone already knows: "She was nice." "It was a July day in Arizona. The weather was warm."
- ☐ My topic is still too big: "Weather" "World Peace" "All About Computers"
- ☐ I think a reader would still have some important questions: "Who's Pearl? I can't tell if she's your aunt or your pet goldfish." "Does global warming affect weather?" "What actually caused the hot air balloon to crash? I kept waiting for your explanation."

## 5 That's it! Focused, clear, specific, concise

- ☐ My writing brims with details that hold a reader's attention. The main point is very focused and easy to understand.
- ☐ I think a reader would learn something reading this.
- ☐ I showed what was happening ("The wildly spiraling tornado aimed straight for our barn") rather than just telling ("It was scary").
- ☐ My topic is small and focused: "What to do when a tornado hits"
- ☐ Interesting tidbits ("You hear a tornado before you see it") keep my readers reading; no one will get bored and doze off reading this.
- ☐ I included what was important (whether a tornado can really pick up a house) and left out trivia and details not related to my topic (names of hurricanes since 1900).
- ☐ I could easily answer the question: What is the point of this paper or story?