



# Thinking through the issue

## *a checklist for students, writers and citizens*

**(1) Identify the issue.** What is the issue? (You've discovered it through the media or in your readings, etc.) For a better focus, frame it as a question to be answered. If your issue is for a paper, be sure it is not too broad, but narrow and focused

enough for a detailed treatment in a few pages. Is your paper analytical, expository, argumentative, or a narrative? Develop a thesis statement summarizing the main points or arguments for one of these approaches to your writing.

**(2) Describe and dissect the issue.** Why is it an issue? What are its components in general and in more specific terms? Is it global, national, local? If it is national, can you find local parallels and counterparts in your state and community? What are the pro, con arguments and sides to the issue? What are the social, political, economic ramifications of the issue? Are concerns and arguments justified, legitimate, provable or supported by evidence? Distinguish between facts and opinions, knowledge and beliefs, objectivity and bias regarding the issue. Are there liberal or conservative slants to the issue? What do the "experts" and authoritative sources say about the issue? Find peer-reviewed, scholarly articles on the topic as well as policy briefs and in-depth investigative news reporting.

**(3) What is the history and background of the issue?** What are its origins and recent developments, trends, patterns and future projections/forecasts?

**(4) Who are the "players" in the issue?** Who is most affected by the issue and why? Who are the proponents, opponents in the issue? Who are the stakeholders in the issue — who stands to gain, who stands to lose in policy actions (passage of laws or allocations of funds and resources)? Who is/feels threatened by the issue and why? Who is positively and negatively impacted by the issue and possible resolutions of the issue?

**(5) What are the proposed solutions?** Is there more than one possible solution, and what are their ramifications and possible repercussions? What are the costs/cost-benefit ratios and requirements to implement these solutions? How do these solutions impact specific players, segments of the population, and society in general?