THE WRITING CENTER
St. Edward's University

Developing Your Ideas

Don't underestimate your reader's curiosity

Readers *like* details. Specific, relevant details make a piece of writing vivid, clear, and interesting. Remember that your readers rely solely on "what's on the page" to convey the images or thoughts that you wish to share with them. Put yourself in the reader's position and give them the specific details, evidence, and connections they need.

Determine the evidence needed

Consider the type of writing that you are doing. This will help you identify the most appropriate evidence for your writing project.

- For example, a narrative piece might benefit from added *description, metaphors, dialog, sensory details,* or *personal experience*. A literary analysis might call for *specific passages from a literary work* or *descriptions of specific scenes*. A research paper or argumentative essay might be strengthened with additional *information from other sources*, *explanations of how ideas relate, how sources support their own arguments,* and *comparisons or contrasts* to other thoughts and opinions.
- *Asking good questions* within your paper and exploring possible answers can allow you to further explore an issue.
- Often, the use of *specific wording* throughout your essay can be key to explaining concepts. If you use vague language, it's hard to show the link to necessary details.

Identify which ideas need elaboration

- *Pinpoint the ideas that need expansion*
  Read through your draft and underline *any* idea that could be further explained. Then decide which of these ideas are the most important to expand on – and how. Do some underlined sections need more specific wording to make the point clearer? Or is an example needed to illustrate a particular point? Would further explanations be useful? Could more context or background information be helpful to readers? Have you explained how sources support their arguments?
- *Look for "skinny" paragraphs*
  If you have a particularly short paragraph, consider why it is so "skinny" and whether it needs to be enhanced with additional evidence.
- *Find an inquisitive reader*
  Ask others to read your paper and mark any areas where they would like to know more. Better yet, ask them to include specific questions in the margins about ideas that they want to know more about. Readers can guide you to areas that need elaboration. Often, what seems clear in your own head is not clear or developed on the page.