

Prewriting Ideas

Use these prewriting ideas to help you find topics to write about. These ideas can also help you focus, explore, or narrow your topic.

- ▶ **Reading** Read stories in books and magazines. Note story ideas that occur to you. Choose and develop one idea.
- ▶ **Brainstorming settings** Work alone, with a partner, or with a small group. Quickly make notes about interesting or faraway places where stories could take place.
- ▶ **Brainstorming characters** Quickly list characteristics you have observed in people. Then create characters for your story by clustering any of these characteristics. Add details describing how the characters look, think, and act.

- ▶ **Brainstorming plots** List ideas for the conflict or problem that your major characters must solve. Choose one conflict for your characters. Then explain how the conflict is resolved.
- ▶ **Talking and listening in pairs** Take turns telling your story ideas. Tell whom the story is about and what will happen. Listen to your partner's questions and ideas.

Conflict ideas

A boy is accused of stealing money.
Tom makes the team, but his friend Carlos does not.
Jason can't make friends at his new school.
Marta discovers she has an identical twin.

- ▶ **Free-associating** Write the word that *challenge*, *excitement*, *difficulty*, or *reward* makes you think of. Then write the next word that comes to mind. Keep writing until a story idea begins to form.
- ▶ **Drawing** Draw a scene that shows one or more people doing something. Then write what happens next.
- ▶ **Looking at art** Look at paintings, drawings, and photographs. Tell the stories you see in them.

- ▶ **Listening to music** Play a favorite piece of music on an instrument or a CD player. Close your eyes and try to picture the scene the melody suggests. Then tell the story you have imagined.



- ▶ **Watching movies** Think about the movies you have seen at the cinema or on television. Think about how you could change their settings, characters, or plots to create your own story.
- ▶ **Scanning newspapers** Scan a newspaper to find interesting stories and photographs. Read the stories and captions. Fill in the missing pieces by creating your own story based on one newspaper story or photograph.