

Choosing a Genre to Compose In

After reviewing your freewrite, you should have a better sense of what you want to say about your topic. Your next decision is to choose a genre. You may find the checklist on [page 54](#) helpful.

Steps for Choosing a Genre to Compose In

Step 1. Revisit your topic & central idea. Remember that rough draft? Since you've done more reading and analyzed a variety of genres, what's changed for you? How might that affect your focus?

Step 2. Revisit your rhetorical situation. Remember that the piece you are composing is a response to a situation. What has motivated you to communicate these ideas? What are you responding to? What's your stake in this? Why do you care about this?

Step 3. Focus on your purpose. Look over your initial freewrite and highlight some of the main ideas you want to explore. Make a list of four or five of them. Next, choose the idea that you are most excited about. Then, decide on the primary purpose of the piece you are composing.

Step 4. Really think about your audience. Consider your audience. Keep in mind that aspects of your topic that are obvious to you may not be obvious to your audience.

Step 5. Strategize on how you'll use rhetorical appeals. Start thinking about how to appeal to your audience's senses of ethos, logos, and pathos.

Step 6. Consider your mode & medium. Once you have narrowed the scope of your purpose and audience, think about whether you want to work with text, visuals, video, audio, or some combination. Consider the advantages of each, as well as your skills and the tools available to you.

Step 7. Narrow your choices down to three possible genres. Put together a short list of potential genres you want to consider. Remember that there is no perfect genre. Your goal at this point is to choose a genre that will best enable you to respond to your rhetorical situation.

Step 8. Look at examples of the three genres you're interested in. There are many features to consider when looking at genre:

- **Is point of view important for your purpose and audience?** For example, if you need your piece to be first person so that it includes your perspective, make sure you choose a genre that accommodates this point of view.
- **What type of connection do you want to establish with your audience?** If you want to remain at a critical distance, consider choosing a genre that emphasizes ethos in its rhetorical appeal. To make a closer connection by appealing to readers' emotions regarding your topic, consider choosing a genre that emphasizes pathos.
- **What tone do you want to use in order to achieve your purpose?** If you want your piece to have a certain level of formality (or informality), be sure to choose a genre that demonstrates that.

Step 9. Zero in on how you'll use your experience & evidence. Finally, you'll need to think about how you will use sources in your piece—and how the genre you're considering typically deals with sources. You may realize that you need to do research, talk to experts, or dig deeper. For more on help with research, see [Part 3](#) of this book.

ATTENTION, WRITERS

Keep this in mind: Genre decisions at this point are still tentative; as you draft, you may stumble upon a completely different genre idea that fits your purpose, audience, and other aspects of your rhetorical situation. Keep an open mind as you draft. Remember that the drafting process is a process of discovery.
