

Exploring Point of View

When presenting your ideas, it's always important to acknowledge different points of view and discuss those differences as a part of your work. It is unethical to exclude information that supports a different position from your own.

- As you plan your project, learn about different points of view and adopt your own position.
- While doing research, look not only for information that agrees with you, but also that which does not.
- When writing, explain the context of the topic, discuss differing points of view, and support your assertions with evidence.
- To address differing viewpoints, you're not necessarily focusing on persuading your reader that those points of view are outright wrong. Instead, show how they are biased, oversimplified, based on poor quality information, using out of date data, using evidence selectively, or taking material out of context. **It's worth taking a moment to reflect on whether you're engaging in any of the above tactics, too!**

How can you approach point of view in preparation for your research?

1. **Start with a Research Question:** This should be a question that is precise, arguable, and could be researched.
2. **Statement of Your Position:** This doesn't have to be your personal point of view.
3. **Explore Your Position:** Use the grid below to work through different aspects of your point of view.
4. **Explore an Opposing Position:** Repeat #1-4, asking the question from a different point of view. This will give you a more nuanced understanding of the topic.

Research Question (Are self-driving cars the best solution for future transportation needs?)	
Statement of Your Position (Transportation solutions should focus on mass transit.)	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Costs	Benefits

The following research resources are great places to look for information on topics with current social and political relevance. The information is presented primarily in a pro/con format, so it will inform you of two opposing points of view.

- Issues & Controversies (licensed by the library): <http://tiny.cc/IssuesControversies>
- Debatbase: <https://idebate.org/debatbase>
- ProCon: <https://www.procon.org/>

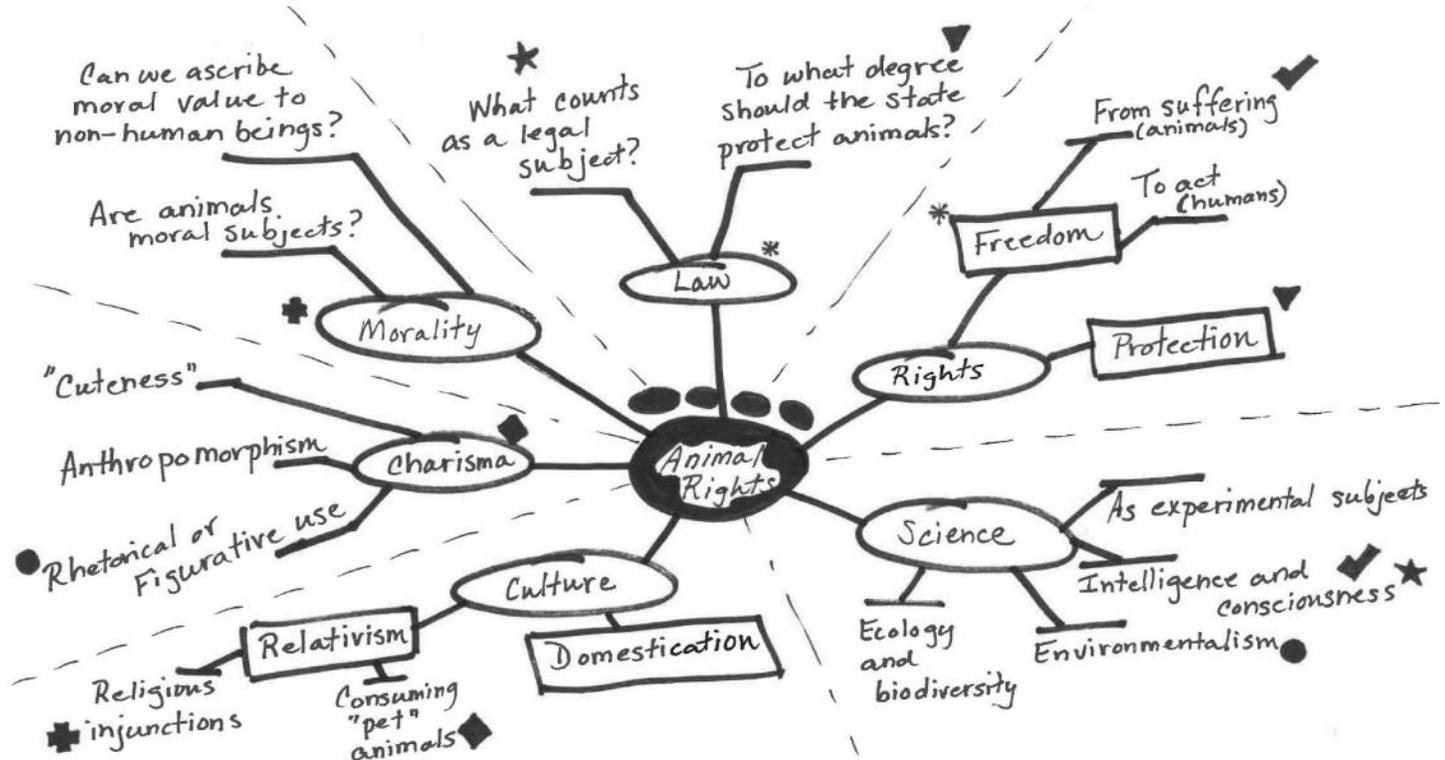
Investigating Complex Issues

While understanding two sides of an argument is undoubtedly useful, a majority of topics have more varying points of view than the simple binary of for-against. Oftentimes, such points of view are informed by the interaction of more fundamental opinions, beliefs, and presuppositions. Generating a mind map for a topic can provide an overview of the intellectual landscape that is both broad and detailed.

After you've identified the topic you want to explore, here's how you might begin generating a mind map:

1. **Break Down:** Determine the constituent subtopics or aspects of the larger topic.
2. **Atomize:** Within each subtopic, identify more specific examples or dynamics that animate or illustrate the subtopic.
3. **Connect:** Begin making connections between subtopics and their constituents to show how different perspectives are interrelated.

Below, we've included a sample mind map to investigate the topic of *animal rights*. What other connections you can make between attributes at varying levels? (Draw arrows, connecting lines, or use symbols, numbers, or letters.)



Using the above as an example, try your hand at developing your own mind-map for one (or more!) of the following topics: *gun control, contraception, capital punishment, fracking, harm reduction programs.*

Such an exercise is useful whenever you need to:

- home in on a compelling issue that is part of a broader topic;
- clarify potential arguments you may make;
- situate your writing in a broader intellectual conversation;
- organize your research; and
- assess and interpret the information you come across in your research.