



## Choose the Best

In this activity, students free write at least one paragraph or as much as a page. Then, they look back at what they've written and choose the single best sentence or idea. Beginning a new document, they copy that single best idea at the top of the page and write from there. They can repeat the process if you'd like, again looking through what they've written and choosing the best ideas.

### Why It Works

The principle behind this technique is similar to that of deleting the first lines or paragraph of a free write, but it skips the often painful step of deletion and instead uses a more positive and less emotional approach: choosing what's good rather than eliminating what's weak.

This approach also allows students to begin the new "blank page" with one solid, thoughtful idea, which significantly lessens the time students need to start their next, stronger free write.

### Pose the Right Questions

To help students choose the best idea, pose specific questions they can consider:

- Is the idea arguable? (That is, would everyone inherently agree with it, in which case there's not much point saying it?)
- Is the idea supportable? (Can I bring evidence to bolster my point?)
- Is the idea original? (Is this innovative and worth stating?)
- Is the idea sophisticated? (Does it present a complex or nuanced concept that requires exploration?)

You needn't ask all of these questions – the first two are a good starting point – and you can develop other questions based on the goals of your assignment and your discipline.