Finding a Focus in your Writing

Avoiding statements that are too broad or too narrow will help focus your writing on an idea that you can develop further into a paragraph or essay. A statement that is too broad offers too many possibilities to easily manage in a single paragraph or short essay. A statement that is too narrow is limited because it does not contain enough information or is too specific to develop further.

Consider the following examples:

**Too broad:** There are many interesting countries in the world.

**Better:** Italy is a popular country for international tourists, and many travelers visit its museums and historical sites.

**Too Narrow:** I have a brother who is three years younger than me.

**Better:** My younger brother knows a lot about computers, and he has fixed several computer problems for relatives.

**Tip:** It’s okay to develop your focus backwards. Start your paragraph or essay by listing everything you want to cover. Sort these ideas and examples until you see the common thread or idea that pulls them together. Leave out anything that doesn’t directly relate to this focus.

**PRACTICE**

Chose one of the statements from each pair below and list a few supporting points that could be used to develop the idea further into an essay.

1. **I enjoy taking math classes for several reasons.**
   a. _______________________________
   b. _______________________________
   c. _______________________________

2. **Training to run a marathon should be done in several stages.**
   a. _______________________________
   b. _______________________________
   c. _______________________________