Evaluate Your Ideas to Narrow the Focus

1. Focus

**Explain the Process**

*SAY: Once we have brainstormed several ideas for writing, we need to decide which idea we most want to write about. Sometimes that can be hard to do because we like several of them. We can narrow our focus by asking ourselves questions about our ideas. This will help us determine the ideas to keep and the ones to eliminate based on our answers. Let me show you how I do that before I choose a topic for a procedural text.*

**Model Evaluating Procedural Text Ideas to Narrow Your Focus**

Display a procedural text ideas evaluation chart like the one shown for this lesson on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read aloud each evaluation question. Use the sample topic ideas on the chart or list ideas of your own to model thinking aloud to narrow the focus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas for Writing a Procedural Text</th>
<th>Do I like this idea for a procedural text?</th>
<th>Do I want to share this idea with others?</th>
<th>Do I want to learn more about this idea?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wash a car</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send a text message</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make a pizza</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saddle a horse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Sample Procedural Text Ideas Evaluation Chart (BLM 2)*

**Read aloud first evaluation question. Say:** *If my answer to this question is “no,” is this a good idea for me to write about? (Allow responses.) Well, I am going to answer “no” because I just don’t like this idea anymore. I think it’s boring. I’m just going to move on to the next idea. (Read aloud the second topic idea.) I do like this idea, so I’m going to write “yes” in the first column. I think it’s something that would be fun to write about and I know something about it already.*

**Read aloud second evaluation question. Say:** *I know a lot of people who don’t really know about sending text messages. They’ve heard about it, but they’re not sure how to do it or how it works. My mother is like that. She doesn’t text even though she could on her cell phone. I’m sure a procedural text that gives step-by-step instructions written in simple terms would be something a lot of people like my mom would use. I’m going to write “yes” in the second column, too.*
**Read aloud third evaluation question.** Say: I really do want to learn more about this idea. If my procedural text is going to be good, I need to make sure I know the right terms to use, and I need to know about the different options for texting on different types of phones. Those are things I’d like to know anyhow, so writing about this topic sounds very interesting to me. I’ll write “yes” in the last column, too.

Continue modeling how to evaluate your ideas as time allows. Make sure to include some “no” answers so students understand how to narrow their ideas.

Explain that as students evaluate ideas, they might end up with two or more ideas in which they have answered “yes” to the questions. If this happens, encourage students to use the following questions to help them choose between the ideas:

- Which idea would I like to research more?
- Which idea would I choose to read about?

### 2. Rehearse

**Practice Narrowing the Focus**

Invite students to work with a partner and apply the evaluation questions on the chart to one idea they have for a procedural text. If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

**Share Ideas**

Bring students back together and invite them to share ideas they evaluated and discuss how the questions helped them decide whether they were good ideas for writing about.

### Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Work individually with beginning ELs to help them answer the three questions on the evaluation chart.

**Intermediate**

Model the following sentence frames to help ELs talk to their partners during the “Practice Narrowing the Focus” activity:

- I know/do not know how to ______.
- I like/do not like this idea because ______.
- I do/do not want to learn more about ______.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: decide/decidir; evaluate/evaluar.

### 3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We just learned a strategy for narrowing our focus to select an idea for writing a procedural text. You can use this same chart to evaluate your ideas during independent writing time.

Make BLM 2 available to students who are ready to select their procedural topics during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

### 4. Share

Bring students together. Invite two or three students who have finished evaluating their ideas to share the topic they have chosen to write about and to comment on the process they used to narrow their focus.