Problem/Solution: Making your voice heard

# Objectives

Everyone can think of something that needs to be changed. It can be something small that occurs within a personal or family dynamic; something that occurs within a local community; at the county or state level; it could even be something that affects the entire nation or the planet.

Your last big task is to select one of these problems and become an expert on it. This should be something that you feel a personal connection to or that affects you personally. Because you'll be spending so much time looking into this issue, you'll want to make certain that it's something relatively important to you.

Once you become an expert on your topic, it will be time for you to offer some potential solutions to this problem and how you'd like to see them implemented. You will understand any potential conflicts or conflicting points of view that may prevent your solutions from being successful and address how you will overcome those issues as well.

Just to be clear, this is something that can be as small as a better way to perform a task (like the inventor of the Dyson vacuum cleaner) or graffiti in your community to something really big, like the need for clean affordable energy or the decline in investigative journalism.

One more word of caution: *Take your time*. You're going to be working a lot with this topic so make sure it's something you really want to address.

To get you inspired to fix this issue, watch some of the available Ted Talk videos from ted.com. This organization brings together some of the world's most creative thinkers and performers to give short talks about the work they do in their field.

If you want an example of someone who saw a problem in his community and did something about it, I suggest you [watch this video](file://localhost/William%20Kamkwamba/%20How%20I%20harnessed%20the%20wind) about *The Boy Who Built a Windmill.*

After having watched that I don't think that you can say there is nothing you can do about your problem. With the skills you have and the access to technology and information you are already many steps ahead of William Kamkwamba.

*What do you think he would think of someone in a rich nation that wastes the opportunity to be educated or to try and fix some of the problems that all of us face?*

It's time to get started then. And when you get frustrated, think of William. There is help available from your instructor and your classmates. Use the people and the Research Resources available, that's why they're here.

# Pre-Writing

Demonstrate that a problem in society that should be addressed and propose possible solutions to that problem. This unit will include multiple assignments based on your research.

1. **Who is your audience?** What is your purpose for writing? (hint: it is not because your teacher told you to.) Is there a problem to be solved or a question to be answered?

2. **What is your topic?** Is it too broad or too narrow? Write questions you’d like to answer in your report.

3. **Gather information** on your topic; paste and highlight passages you’d like to include in your paper; record information on your sources that will appear in the Works Cited page. Include the actual citations here so you won't have to write it later.

4. **Are your sources valid/scholarly/reliable?** Does the author: identify him/herself? include contact information? list credentials? (5 sources minimum.)

5. Using your notes, **write an outline** including information you wish to include in your paper. Here's a suggested format to follow. Fill in the details:

I. Introduction

A. Attention grabbing statement/statistics  
B. Brief summary of the topic (just a few sentences)

II. The Problem (Identify it here)

A. For whom is this a problem? (individuals, cities, states, countries, etc. Name them)  
B. Why it's a problem reason 1  
C. Why it's a problem reason 2  
D-? etc.

III. Solutions

A. Solution 1  
B. Solution 2  
C -? keep listing them and how they should be enacted.

IV. Conclusion

6. **Create a title** that captures the reader’s attention.

# Research Writing Requirements

Keep your resources current (last 5 years or newer). The formatting requirements can also be seen in the example for [Proper Formatting](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1D_88WVlzxht7SoQCrpMovHAc1cAQfheiYban8VrWXhU/edit?usp=sharing).

**Final Draft should include**:

* **Word Processing**
* **A proper heading** (name, assignment, class, teacher, date) in upper left corner.
* **Page numbers** (do not include a page number on the first page as the heading and title should make that clear.) Page numbers should be in the upper right and should include author’s last name followed by a number. This should be the very last thing you add so you don't mess up the formatting of your paper.
* **Size 12 font**: Some fonts are larger/smaller than others so anything that's roughly the size of size 12 Times New Roman. (This is a formal paper so no *Comic Sans* or *Flintstones* or some other goofy font like that.)
* **1 inch margins**: Top, Bottom, Left & Right
* **Double spacing**: This means one line between each line, not two spaces between each word.
* **Works Cited page in MLA style**: A proper Works Cited page is worth one full letter grade on this assignment.
* Length requirement **4-7 pages**

Remember that writing will be graded according to the 6+1 Traits, as well as the items below.

1. Is your problem clearly identified? (This should be done in just a few sentences.) Don't spend too much time in your paper explaining your issue. This is not a Report. The reader(s) likely are already somewhat familiar with the problem you've selected.
2. Have you identified for whom this is a problem? (Numbers 2-3 should be roughly half of your paper.)
3. Is your conclusion backed up by the research you've cited? Why is this a problem?
4. Are your potential solutions realistic? (Numbers 4-5 should be roughly half of your paper.)
5. Do you provide a plan for how they might be enacted?

At the end of your submission, skip a few lines and assign yourself a grade. Why do you think that you've earned that grade? Is there a part of your submission which could be improved?

# Podcasting

Use your research paper as a guide. Be sure to include both the history of the problem, why it needs to be solved and the potential solutions. Highlight parts of your research paper that you think are the most convincing and then talk about what legislation might help solve the issue, and you could also include any references to the issue that you see in other media. It should read/sound like you are having a conversation with the audience even though they cannot respond. Like you're talking to a group of friends about the issue.

After you record, post as an MP3 file. The podcast should be approximately 10 min. long.

If you need audio recording software I suggest using [Audacity](http://audacity.sourceforge.net/); GarageBand; or any other recording software. For a browser tool, you can record audio if you sign up for an account on [SoundCloud](http://soundcloud.com/), once you sign up and confirm your email account there is an option to upload audio with a recording feature. You could also broadcast to the web from any phone with [iPadio](http://www.ipadio.com/). There is another tool that works on any device called [AudioBoom](https://audioboom.com/).

After your submission, assign yourself a grade. Why do you think that you've earned that grade? Is there a part of your submission which could be improved?

# Writing Your Reps

We live in a [Representative Democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representative_democracy). There are people legislating on your behalf. They can't possibly be well-informed on every issue that comes up (After all your research, you may know more about your problem than politicians). Write a letter to one of your representatives about your issue and what you'd like to see them do about it. [Review this information](http://www.letterwritingguide.com/) about writing a letter.

Letters that are thought out and researched will mean more to them than a quick email just giving your position on an issue. Do your best to bring their thinking to your point-of-view. Back up your opinions with facts. To get started, you may want to consult some of the links below. Remember, you have representation at the local, state and federal level. If you live on a reservation then you won't want to forget to write to Tribal Government officials as well.

Contact information for your legislators:

Senators <http://www.senate.gov/> Representatives <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>   
[MN State Legislators](http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/legdir.asp) [MN Local Gov't](http://mn.gov/portal/government/local/): (city gov.; County, Townships; etc.)  
[MN Tribal Gov't](http://mn.gov/portal/government/tribal/mn-indian-tribes/index.jsp)