

Plus, Minus, Interesting (PMI)

PMI stands for Plus / Minus / Interesting. It is a strategy for making decisions and generating ideas about issues and topics. You can use this technique for addressing everyday questions such as “Should you buy a car or rely on public transit?” but it is particularly useful when considering possibilities for essay topics.

To help guide the process of choosing a suitable topic, it can be useful to think about different aspects of working on the topic and consider whether each constitutes a plus, a minus or something interesting. You will need three columns to do this exercise:

- First column (Plus): consider the positive results of pursuing a particular topic. *What would be some positive aspects of working on this topic?*
- Second column (Minus): consider the negative results. *What would be some negative aspects of working on this topic?*
- Third column (Interesting): consider potential outcomes of pursuing the topic for research and writing, whether positive, negative, or uncertain. *What are interesting ideas prompted by considering this topic?*

If it adds clarity, consider assigning a score (positive or negative) to each. The scores are not intended to be objective or scientific, but to help you compare different topics.

Plus (positive aspects of working on this topic)	Minus (negative aspects of working on this topic)	Interesting (interesting ideas prompted by considering this topic)
Topic 1: Example		
Closely relates to what we are studying in the course (+5)	Have little background knowledge about topic (-2)	Might give me a good opportunity to read that book I've been hoping to get to (+2)
May feed into larger project I want to undertake about social relations and social media (+5)	Not sure where to start (-3)	Might take me into some interesting philosophical issues, but I may not be ready to tackle them yet (-2)
This is a hot topic currently discussed in media (+4)	Might have to learn a lot of new specialized vocabulary (-2)	Might give me some insight into my relationships with my friends (+2)
+14	-7	+2
Topic 1 Score: +9		

How does this score measure against other topics under consideration?

Use the worksheet to list and rate your topics using the PMI strategy.



PMI Worksheet

Plus	Minus	Interesting
Topic 1:		
+ / -	+ / -	+ / -
Topic 1 Score: + / -		
Topic 2:		
+ / -	+ / -	+ / -
Topic 2 Score: + / -		
Topic 3:		
+ / -	+ / -	+ / -
Topic 3 Score: + / -		