*Does anything distinguish members of one list from the other list?*

All of one list has some common feature

Or everything on one has *a* or *b*, and nothing on the other has either

**No**

Consider which example(s) you can most plausibly get rid of

**Yes**

Make a thesis

*Are there counterexamples to this (that you find compelling)?*

**Start with examples**

List many relevant examples that are clearly wrong

List many relevant examples that are clearly permissible

**Yes**

Congratulations!

You have figured out what your idea is.

Talk to other people about your idea.

**There are counterexamples**

*Can you refine the thesis?*

**No counterexamples**

*Is the idea complete?*

Does it address all the relevant questions / issues?

**Start with a general idea**

(yours or someone else’s)

Make the most general, non-trivial, thesis that fits the idea

**Yes**

**No**

You need a new idea.

**No**

*What questions are left to address?*

Start the process over