

How to select a Research topic?

- 1. Brainstorm general topics that genuinely interest you.** Whether you're responding to a given assignment prompt or choosing your own direction for original research within a field, your experience will be more meaningful if you pick a subject that you care about. Write down all the possibilities that occur to you so that you have a generous list of options to start from.
 - One way to ensure you have a topic that's of interest to you to pick a subject to which you have a personal connection. For instance, if your sister has Crohn's Disease, you may be interested in investigating it. Or, if you went on an exchange program to Croatia, you might be keen to know more about its history or culture.
 - Another way to trim down your possibilities is to see if there any patterns that emerge from the longer list
- 2. Do preliminary research to pick a topic.** Select your top choices from the list you created to pursue further. Take time to do some background reading on each in general reference texts like encyclopedias and to do keyword searches in a library database to see what textual and online sources are available in relation to each potential topic. Then, select one to focus on that you find the most interesting and that has sufficient resources to investigate.
 - You want to choose a topic that has some, but not too much information available on it. If there are some substantive related resources out there, you know you're on the right track; if there are pages and pages of relevant search results, you can tell that plenty of people have already gone down that road or that the topic is likely too big to cover and you will need to narrow it further.

3. **Start broad and narrow your focus.** Once you have a general topic that interests you, begin by reading widely about it. Write down the ideas, information, and sources that interest you the most. Then, review your notes to start refining your topic into a precise, narrow research focus.
 - For instance, if you are interested in the mapping of the human genome, read about the general history of the scientific advances that have allowed us to map DNA and see if there's a particular subtopic that catches your eye. Instead of trying to cover the entire subject, limit your scope to focus on the discovery of a gene related to a specific trait or disease or on a particular application, like the regulation of gene therapy for unborn fetuses
4. **Consult with a relevant scholar.** It's good to vet your ideas with an established academic or other professional related to the field in which you'll be conducting your research. If you're having trouble deciding among topics or narrowing your scope, seek advice and suggestions from your professor, advisor, or another knowledgeable professional.
 - When you meet with or email them, explain the research that you've already conducted to show them that you've done your homework. Then, ask something like, "I'm most interested in looking into coming of age rituals in contemporary indigenous cultures, and I was wondering if you think that's a good topic to pursue and if you had any suggestions for specific case studies or other resources related to it."
 - Remember: they may be able to point you in a more specific direction based on your general interests, but don't expect them to do the whole selection process for you.
 - If you're doing independent research to earn a degree (rather than to fulfill the requirements of a particular class), you should also ask them about the potential marketability of your subject since your topic will be setting the direction for your future career.