



## Selecting and Narrowing a Topic for Research Writing

### Tips on choosing a topic

- Find topics that would provide enough information for your paper and allow formulation of new ideas from the ones already written by other writers.
- Choose topics that are interesting to you.
- Restrict your topic to a particular question; this enables you to effectively answer that question in the number of pages assigned for the research paper.

### Steps for finding a topic

#### Preliminary Reading

- Provides you with an overview of the subjects.
- Allows you to determine if you have enough materials to develop your research paper.
- Involves browsing through table of contents of textbooks that have different topics, encyclopedias, biographical dictionaries, Internet sources, and many others in order to find general ideas on a potential topic.

#### Selecting topics that interest you

- Finding subjects that are of interest to you motivates you to find enough materials to satisfy your own curiosity on the subject and related topics.
- Relate the subject of your research to your own interests if the instructor has already specified what the subject should be. For example, if your assigned subject deals with child development and your interests are in linguistics, choose a topic that deals with language development in children.

#### Brainstorming ideas that you find for your topic

- Includes free writing, making lists, and drawing clusters of ideas in order to come up with a specific topic.

#### Narrowing your topic

##### **1. Determine the type of research that you intend to write by asking the following questions.**

- Is this a research process that shows a step-by-step description of what I found?
- Is this a critical paper that arrives at some judgement or conclusion after my research on the topic?
- Is this a narrative or descriptive paper of some aspect of my topic?
- Is this an argumentative paper that argues for or against a particular idea in my topic?

These questions will enable you to formulate a specific question that addresses a specific aspect of your topic in the research paper. Some papers might address all these questions, but others may just have one, depending on the requirements made by your instructor.

##### **2. Write down your topic and all the categories or major issues, and study areas that are part of the topic.**

**3. Choose one major category and see if it has any more specific issues that can be addressed in a research paper.**

**4. Formulate a question that will allow you to write a process, description, argument, narration, or critical analysis of your topic using all the ideas from the sources that you will use.**