How to Narrow Your Topic

When you begin researching, you may discover that your topic is too large to cover in the amount of time you have. There are many ways to narrow your topic.

The chart below shows many ways you can narrow your topic. You can also use the Narrow Your Topic worksheet on the next page.

Narrow by	Original Topic	Sample Narrowing Questions	Narrowed Topic
Time	Homeland Security	During what time span? During the current year? In the future?	What improvements to homeland security have been made since September 11, 2001?
Place	The decline of the sea otter population	In what country or geographic region?	Why does the sea otter population keep declining in the Monterey Bay?
Population	Voting Trends in the United States	What is the gender, age, occupation, ethnicity, nationality, educational level, or species?	Voting Trends among Hispanics, age 18-24 in the United States.
Viewpoint	Steroid Abuse among Athletes	What are the ethical, medical, social, economic, legal, political, religious, biological, psychological or historical aspects?	What are the psychological aspects of steroid abuse?
Genre or Style [or type]	Influence of Silent Films On today's movies	What are the different styles or genres related to this topic?	Influence of screwball comedy silent films on today's movies.
Causes or Effects	Rap Music	What are the factors that influenced or brought about this topic? What influence or effect did this topic have on a people, place, or other topics related to this one?	How did blues and rock & roll artists influence Rap artists?

Developed by Doug Achterman, 2003

Broad Category: Social Media
Narrowed by Type, Location, and Demographic: Twitter Use in the United States by teens aged 13 to 17

Directions. Select three topics and develop a research agenda that has social implications—in other words *why* would you want to research Twitter use among US teens?

Example: I am researching Twitter use among US teens aged 13 to 17 to determine whether it impacts their political views.