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

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.

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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?

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