

How to Narrow Your Topic

U.S. Conn Library

If your topic is too broad or vague you will find too much information and will need to narrow the focus.

Example: I'm thinking of doing a paper on "**sports.**" This topic could develop in many different ways.

Hint: Ask Yourself Questions About Your Topic:

- What **do** you know about it? What **don't** you know?
- What **time period** do you want to cover? Since 1990? This year? In the future?
- On what **geographic region** do you want to focus? Do you want to focus on social norms & values, economic & political systems, or languages?
- On what **population** do you want to focus? Gender, age, occupation, ethnicity, nationality, educational attainment, species, etc?
- From what **viewpoint** do you want to examine the topic? Historical, social, legal, medical, ethical, biological, psychological, economic, political, philosophical? A viewpoint allows you to focus on a single aspect.
- **What kind of information** do you need?
 - a brief summary or a lengthy explanation?
 - periodical articles, books, essays, encyclopedia articles?
 - statistics?

Sample Topic Narrowing Chart:

General Topic:	sports
Time span:	1950s
Place:	US; rural
Person or Group:	team sports, college coaches
Viewpoint or Aspects:	ethical;

Narrowed Research Question:	What were the ethical standards of rural American college coaches for team sports in the 1950s?
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For more assistance, come see us in- person, visit our website below, or call us at 402-375-7263.