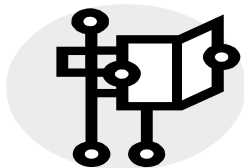


Selecting a Topic

Quick Guide to Selecting a Topic:

- Consider the questions:
 1. **What questions have never been answered to your satisfaction?**
 2. **What do you want to learn more about?**
 3. **On what subject would you like to become an expert?**
- Make lists of interesting topics based on things you like, people you admire, etc.
- Use the Step-by-Step Guides to help find a topic (found under research guides in the 'still stuck' box on the HBLL homepage)



Narrowing Your Topic

Finding Background Resources:

Background information will help you focus your topic as you learn what is important to the larger issue.

General Encyclopedias:

- Found at the top of the Step-by-Step Guide.
- Located in General Reference on the 3rd floor.
- Use the online encyclopedias.

Specialized Encyclopedias:

- Found in the Step-by-Step Guides
- Contain articles specific to your topic
- Help to find sub-topics and authorities.

CQ Researcher—an online database that contains information, bibliographies, and issue questions relating to numerous topics

Background Resources contain:

- General information on the subject.
- Subcategories that might be appropriate for the focus of your paper.
- Terminology (keywords, subjects, phrases, synonyms) used in the study of that subject.
- Names of people important in this subject (authorities in the field).
- A bibliography or list of relevant sources that may be useful in later stages of research.

Remember:

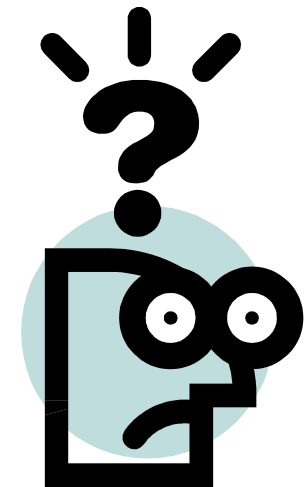
1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION CANNOT BE CITED IN YOUR FINAL PAPER.
2. Use the Step-by-Step Guides
3. Talk to the reference desks.
4. Talk to the different subject librarians.

Ways to Narrow Your Topic:

- **Geographic area:** How frequently do earthquakes hit the U.S.? California?
- **Time period:** What were the major natural disasters during the Middle Ages? The 18th century? The 1960's?
- **Age group:** Do the elderly suffer more from natural disasters than children?
- **Cultural or religious group:** In what ways do religious beliefs of Christians and Muslims affect their reactions to natural disasters?
- **Socio-economic group:** What is the difference of the impact of hurricanes on the middle class as compared to those who live below the poverty line?
- **Point of view:** Look at your topic through the lens of a specific subject field: meteorology – hurricane formation; political science – disaster response by government agencies; economics – disaster impact on gasoline prices.

Selecting & Narrowing Your Topic

GETTING STARTED
CAN BE THE
HARDEST PART



Need Help getting started?

- ⇒ Selecting a topic
- ⇒ Finding background information
- ⇒ Narrowing your topic