

Steps to Choosing a Topic¹

1. Brainstorm!

- What interests you? (You will be spending a lot of time with this topic over the next month, so make sure you find it interesting. ☺)
- What have you seen or read about in the news lately that could be a topic?
- Talk to your classmates, teachers, or librarian to get ideas.
- Take a look at the non-fiction section to see books on different topics.

2. Double check your assignment.

- Does the topic you picked fit the assignment?
- Does the topic have two sides you can argue?
- Does the topic have enough information to fill up the page requirement?
- What kind of sources do you need?

3. List keywords you will use when you start your research.

- Turn your research topic into a question. (For example: What are the effects of global warming on the environment?)
- What kinds of words will authors use to talk about your topic? What are the major concepts related to your topic? (For example: global warming, climate change, ice caps, green house gases, pollution)

4. Start reading background information on your topic.

- Even though you cannot use encyclopedias as sources for your paper, they can be a very good place to start to learn about your topic.
- Use encyclopedias to add to your keywords.

Helpful Websites

U of I Subject Guides: <http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/subjects/subjects.html> (Here are list of topics. If you click on a link to a topic, you will find helpful keywords to use in your research.)

Tolono Public Library: <http://library.booksite.com/7076/nl/?list=CNL16> (Look here at the encyclopedias for background information on your topic.)

Popular Topics: http://www.dallas.k12.or.us/DHS_Library/web/popular.htm (This school librarian in Texas put together a list of topics that can be argued from two points of view.)

Don't forget to check out the non-fiction section for books about your topic!

¹ Adapted from the Duke University Library website:

<http://library.duke.edu/services/instruction/libraryguide/choosing.html>