Choosing Your Topic

The first step in the research process for all of your writing assignments is selecting a topic that meets two requirements:

1. **The topic should be interesting.** Generally, writers who are interested in their topics have a good chance of making their topics interesting to readers.

2. **The topic must be researchable.** Trivial topics that might have popular interest but little serious scholarly interest are not appropriate for assignments in many academic writing courses. For example, "The Best Place to Spend Spring Break" might not be researchable, but, "The Affect of Spring Break on Study Habits" might be.

The topic must be old enough to have a substantial research base yet new enough to still be relevant and interesting. Do not commit yourself if you are unsure about the availability of sources. Find out how much material the library has on the topic.

The following questions might help you after you have selected a general topic:


2. What **claim** are you going to make about this topic? What is your thesis?

3. What are the **main points** you will discuss? What is the scope of your topic? List them in their order of importance.

4. Who is your **audience** for this essay? What aspects of the topic will be interesting and relevant to your audience?

5. What aspects of the topic may **not** be **interesting or relevant** to your audience?

6. Are there **points or issues** you will need to omit in order to narrow your topic? What are they?

7. Give a brief account of what **other people have said** or written about your topic.

8. **Explain** why you agree or disagree with what other people have said about your topic.

9. Give a brief **explanation of issues** that might make your topic arguable or controversial.

10. Which of these issues will you emphasize in your essay? Explain why these issues seem **relevant** to your thesis.

11. Will you purposely avoid any of these issues? Explain why.