

Assignment – Choosing and Narrowing a Topic

Librarian: _____

Due Date: _____

Professor: _____

Remember to keep the assignment in mind as you work through this process.

1. **Brainstorming ideas:** What hot topics have been in the news lately? Is there an issue that you think your classmates should know about? What special interests to you have? Write down at least three topic ideas.
2. **Finding background information:** Select one topic from the above list and look for background information in an encyclopedia or reference book. Jot down some at least three specific facts or aspects of the topic you would want to explore further. Provide a stylistically correct citation for this source (in the style of your professor's preference). You will need this information for your bibliography.
3. **Write a thesis/topic statement.** Use the list you created in step 2 to choose one narrower aspect of your topic. Once you have selected a specific aspect of your topic, write it down as a statement. This statement expresses the topic and purpose of your paper or assignment. It will guide your research and help you to stay focused. A good thesis statement should:
 - tackle a subject upon which reasonable people could disagree and tell the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter
 - deal with a subject that can be adequately researched given the nature of the assignment
 - express one main idea
 - assert your conclusions about a subject
 - avoid vague language (like "it seems").
 - avoid the first person. ("I believe," "In my opinion")
 - be a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
 - be in the form of a single sentence somewhere within your first 2 or 3 paragraphs

Examples of Good Thesis Statements

While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own rights to property and self-government.

Even though Christians and Muslims were supposedly fighting for religious dominance in the medieval world, their motives were strongly affected by the desire for land and economic influence.