

## Narrowing a Topic

### How to Narrow or Broaden Your Topic

<http://www.farmingdale.edu/library/chtopic.html#How>

If your topic is **too broad**, you will find too much information and will have difficulty writing about it because there will be too much to include. You will need to narrow your focus. If your topic is **too narrow, too specific, too specialized or too new**, you will have difficulty finding enough information about it and will need to broaden your focus.

#### Narrowing Your Topic:

General topic you need to narrow:

I want to write a paper about environmental policy.

Ask Yourself These Questions:

- What do you already know about it?
- What don't you know about it?
- What aspects of it do you find interesting? (historical, sociological, political?)
- What time period do you want to cover?
- What geographic region do you want to focus on?
- What kind of information do you need?(books, statistics, articles?)

Topic Narrowing Chart:

General topic:	environmental movement
Time span:	1970's
Place:	U.S.
Person or group:	industry, manufacturing
Event or aspects:	mideast oil crisis

*Narrowed Topic Sentence:* How did the oil crisis of the 1970's shape the environmental protection practices of U.S. industries?

#### Broadening Your Topic:

Specific topic you need to narrow:

I'd like to do a paper on whether irradiated meat is safe to eat.

Ask Yourself These Questions:

- Are there similar concerns associated with related topics? **For example, could you examine other experimental ways of preserving food?**
- Could you think in terms of what the broader issue is, for example, **what are the current concerns with food safety?**
- Can you pick out the key players in this issue and focus on them? For example, **the FDA, consumers, scientists?**
- Are there other issues associated with this topic, for example, **food labeling?**
- Is there **a law or a regulation or an event** that brought about or influenced this issue? Can you trace its development?

Topic Broadening Chart:

Specific topic:	safety of irradiated meat
Alternate focus:	food preservation, labelling
AlternatePlace:	U.S., Europe
Alternate groups affected:	consumers, food processors
Event or aspects:	recent outbreaks of <i>e coli</i> contamination & recall of ground beef

*Broader Topic Sentence:* What are the concerns of consumers and producers in the controversy over irradiated foods?

Narrowing or Broadening your Topic has been adapted from the [UCLA College Library](#) instruction page.

## Is Your Topic Too Broad or Too Narrow?

<http://www.pc.maricopa.edu/departments/library/guides/topicselect.html>

### Too Broad?

You have decided you are interested in **Global Warming**. Well, that is a broad subject area likely to have a large amount of information written on it. To narrow your topic, choose some specific aspect of global warming, such as: Is Global Warming Affecting Our Climate?

Just Right! **Is Global Warming Affecting Our Climate?**

### Too Narrow?

If you had continued narrowing your topic, and decided to write a paper on **Global Warming and its Effect on U.S. Snowfall Amounts**, you would probably find that it was difficult to gather enough information on this topic. In that case, you could broaden your topic back out to Is Global Warming Affecting Our Climate?

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## Electronic Help:

Go to Opposing Viewpoints Research Center (Library Database Page)

Click "Sex Education" for your topic

You will see 90 viewpoint essays. That is too broad. There is too much information.

Start scanning through the titles of the viewpoint essays to get an idea about a narrower topic with greater focus.

As you scan, you will see some of the issues:

- Teen Pregnancy
- Abstinence-Only Programs
- What to Teach
- AIDS

To narrow the topic, go to advanced search. In the first keyword slot, type "sex education." In the second keyword slot, type "abstinence-only." Now there are 48 essays. scan and decide whether you can narrow the topic more.

To narrow the topic, go to advanced search. In the first keyword slot, type "sex education." In the second keyword slot, type "abstinence-only." In the third keyword slot, type "teen pregnancy." The result – seven (7) viewpoint essays. Select two with opposing viewpoints – one essay that says abstinence-only programs reduce teen pregnancy – another essay that says abstinence-only programs increase teen pregnancy. (You are going to have to scan/read several essays before you select the two you will use.)