

Conducting a Research Using a Step-by-Step Process:

Read through all the instructions and complete the activities included for each of the steps.

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STEP 1: Choose a topic and state it in question format. *What problem are you facing or what is an issue you are trying to resolve? The question should be as specific as possible and relate to an important personal or business issue.*

Activity #1-2.01 Assess information needs

Directions:

1. Using the **2.01 Self-Assessment Handout** (provided by your teacher) rate your current level of research knowledge.
2. Read through "How to Choose a Subject or Area of Interest" below (*adapted from The College of San Mateo Library* <http://www.smccd.edu/accounts/csmlibrary/tutorials/english/introeng.html>)
3. **View the video**, "Selecting a topic that interests you" ([https://www.questia.com/research-](https://www.questia.com/research-tutorials/1/352/video/selecting-a-topic-that-interests-you)

How to Choose a Subject or Area of Interest

The first step in the research process is to decide on a tentative subject or area of interest. At this point in your research, it is perfectly acceptable if you only have a very general idea of what you'd like to pursue. For example, you may decide you'd like to research illegal immigration, alcoholism, freedom of speech, computer networks, elementary education, or astronomy. Ultimately, though, each of these subjects is far too broad for a single research project.

Even though you have started by thinking only of a general subject area, your goal is to narrow and focus your subject until you come up with a research topic, which is often stated in the form of a question. What is the difference between a subject and a topic? A subject is a broad area of interest from which a more specific topic can be chosen. A research topic, therefore, is a relatively narrow area of interest that can be thoroughly researched and discussed within the page-length guidelines given by your instructor. Examples of subjects and topics are given below:

SUBJECT	RESEARCH TOPIC
Elementary education	"What are effective methods for teaching children how to read?"
Journalism	"What are the effects of corporate ownership and media monopolies on news reporting and editorial freedom?"
Astronomy	"What are the latest speculations about the origins of the universe?"
Economics	"How does illegal immigration affect the United States' economy?"
Law/Political Science/Sociology	"What steps, if any, should the government take to censor pornography and hate speech on the Internet?"

Notice that each of the five research topic examples is an open-ended question, i.e. they are phrased in such a way that the researcher is deliberating different perspectives. This open-minded approach to all viewpoints is essential.

[tutorials/1/352/video/selecting-a-topic-that-interests-you](https://www.questia.com/research-tutorials/1/352/video/selecting-a-topic-that-interests-you))