



Defining a Research Topic: What am I going to write about?

To begin the research process you must have a topic. There are several steps involved in defining your research topic. You will begin with a subject, reduce your subject to a topic, and then reduce your topic to your thesis statement, or the main argument around which you will build your paper.

Here are some steps to follow when trying to define your research topic:

1. Identify which subject area you will be working in. This could be a broad subject like an academic area such as Biology, History, or Humanities. It could also be a more focused subject like The American Civil War.
2. Narrow your subject even more to find your topic. Writing a paper on the entirety of the Civil War is a bit too broad. There is no way you could write a comprehensive, well researched paper on the entire Civil War in 10 pages. Ask yourself which aspect of the subject interests you. Is there a person, a group of people, a place, or an event that you are specifically interested in? Is there a specific side to an issue that you would like to explore further?
3. Once you know your topic, you must decide where you want your paper to go. Do you want argue for or against an issue? Do you want to demonstrate the reasons for an event occurring? The answers to these types of questions will be the foundation for your thesis statement. You should base your thesis around what the research supports.

Here's an example of narrowing a topic based on the American Civil War:

