Contact

CALL

800.451.5724

Site-specific library phone numbers are available on the Locations and Hours page.

CHAT

Chat with the Library

E-MAIL

librarycontact@wilmu.edu

Questions, comments and suggestions are always welcome.

VISIT US

Library locations and hours of operation can be found here, wilmu.edu/LibraryLocations

Wilmington University Library

We Help You Learn.

LIBRARY MISSION

The Library is an integral part of the Wilmington University academic community and supports the delivery of academic programs by:

- Collecting and facilitating access to information in multiple formats.
- Linking to global networks.
- Guiding our academic community to think critically in the evaluation and ethical use of information.
- Providing adaptive learning spaces and the technologies to support research and the creation of knowledge.
- Preserving the scholarly record and unique content of the University.

VISION

The Wilmington University Library is a destination for the discovery of knowledge, offering research guidance, essential information resources, state-of-the-art technologies, learning spaces, and a service-oriented staff guiding the transformation of information services and innovative collaborations.
Selecting a Research Topic in 7 Steps

WHERE TO BEGIN?
The ability to develop a good research topic is an important skill. Sometimes instructors will assign a specific topic, but usually they will ask you to select a topic that interests you.

Selecting a good topic is not easy. It must be narrow and focused enough to be interesting yet broad enough to find adequate information. Use the steps below to help you carefully define and select your research topic.

#1 BRAINSTORM

Brainstorm for ideas
Choose a topic that interests you or is relevant to your situation.
- Do you have a strong opinion on a current social or political controversy?
- Did you read a newspaper article, or see a TV broadcast recently that piqued your curiosity or made you angry or anxious?
- Do you have a personal issue or interest you’d like to know more about?
- Do you have a research paper due in a class this semester?
- Is there an aspect of one of your courses you are interested in?
Write down any words or phrases that you could use as search terms.

#2 READ

Read general background information
Read a general encyclopedia article on the top two or three topics you are considering.
Use article databases to scan current magazine, journal, or newspaper articles on the topic.
Do a basic search on the Internet to find web sites on the topic.

#3 FOCUS IN

Keep it manageable
A topic will be very difficult to research if it is too broad, or too narrow.
One way to narrow a broad topic is to limit. Common ways to limit a topic are by geographic region, culture, time frame or population group.
Remember that a topic will be more difficult to research if it is locally confined. For example: What sources of pollution affect the Ogden valley water supply? Also, if the topic is too recent it may be difficult to find enough information for a research paper.

#4 LIST KEYWORDS

Make a list of useful keywords
Keep track of the words that are used to describe your topic.
- Look for words that best describe your topic.
- Look for descriptive words in the encyclopedia articles and other reading you do while selecting your topic.
- Find synonyms and broader and narrower terms for each keyword in order to expand your search capabilities.
- Keep a list of these words to use as keywords later as you search in catalogs and other online databases.

#5 BE FLEXIBLE

Be flexible with your topic
It is common to modify your topic during the research process. You can never be sure of what you may find. You may find too much and need to narrow your focus, or too little and need to broaden your focus. When researching, you may not wish to change your topic, but you may decide that some other aspect of the topic is more interesting or manageable.

#6 RESEARCH

Research and read more about your topic
Use the keywords you have gathered to research in the library catalog and article databases. Find more information to help answer your research question.
You will need to do some research and reading before you select your final topic. Can you find enough supporting information to answer your research question?

#7 FORMULATE

Formulate a thesis statement or research question
The research goal and purpose can be expressed in either of two ways: as a thesis statement or as a research question.

Thesis Statement
- Write your topic as a thesis statement. Your thesis statement will be one or two sentences that state precisely what is to be answered, proven, or what you will inform your readers about your topic.
- The development of a thesis assumes there is sufficient evidence to support the thesis statement.
For example, a thesis statement could be: Music benefits both society and the individual in a number of practical ways.

Research Question
You will often begin with a couple of words, develop a more focused interest in an aspect of something relating to these words, then begin to have questions about the topic. For example:
- Ideas = music effects
- Research Question = In what ways does music affect people?
- Focused Research Question = What positive effects does music have on young children?