



# **Chapter 20**

## **Planning Your Research Project**

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1. Start with topics that truly interest you; this is the only way you can do meaningful work.
2. Learn as much as you can about each topic. You cannot guess in a research paper.


# Getting started

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3. Take a few risks by approaching each topic in a new or unusual way.
4. Give yourself plenty of time.  
Quality research cannot be rushed.

# Getting started

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The traditional research paper is a fairly long essay complete with a thesis statement, supporting evidence, integrated sources, and documentation.

**Academic research**

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- Formal or semiformal voice
- Thoughtful, confident tone
- **AVOID** the pronouns “I” and “you” in an effort to remain objective and academic

# **Academic research**

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- Getting started
- Planning
- Conducting research
- Developing results

\*See “A Research Flowchart” on page 232

# Research steps

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1. Understand the assignment
2. Select a topic
3. Build research questions
4. Develop a working thesis

# **Initiate the process**

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- Review guidelines
- Record key words, options, restrictions, and requirements
- Find the answers to any questions you have

# **Understand the assignment**

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- Find an appropriate topic you sincerely want to explore and write about
- Select a “manageable” topic
- A topic is manageable when you can learn about it in a reasonable amount of time

\*See examples on page 232

# Select a topic

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- List questions about your topic
- Keep listing until you land on the **main question** you want to answer – the main issue you need to address
- Brainstorm **supporting questions** that you must research in order to adequately answer the main question

## **Build research questions**

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- ✓ Is the question too narrow, too broad or just about right for a research paper?
- ✓ Is the question too easy or too hard to answer?
- ✓ Am I committed to answering this question? Does it interest me?
- ✓ Will I be able to find enough information about it within a reasonable amount of time?
- ✓ Will the questions and answers interest the reader?

## **Checklist: Main Question**

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- A working thesis offers a **preliminary answer to your main research question**
- **The thesis statement can NEVER be a question**
- An effective working thesis keeps you focused during your research

# **Develop a working thesis**

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- Do NOT settle for a simple statement of FACT about your topic
- Form a statement that demands to be **PROVED** or requires a **THOUGHTFUL EXPLANATION**

# **Working thesis**

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Limited topic + a tentative claim,  
statement, or hypothesis = a  
working thesis

\*See samples on page 233

**Working thesis formula**

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- ✓ Does my working thesis focus on a single, limited topic?
- ✓ Is it stated clearly and directly?
- ✓ **Does it provide a preliminary answer to my main research question?**
- ✓ **Do I have access to information that supports it?**
- ✓ Does my working thesis meet the requirements of the assignment?

## **Checklist: Working Thesis**

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- Background research
- Primary research
- Library research
- Internet research

**Develop a research plan**

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- Personal primary resources
- Reference works (print and electronic)
- Books (print and electronic)
- Periodicals and news sources
- Audiovisual, digital, and multimedia resources
- Government publications
- Business and nonprofit publications

**Consider possible resources**

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- Primary Sources

*original sources that give firsthand information about a topic*

- Secondary Sources

*Sources that are at least once removed from the original; sources that provide secondhand information*

- Tertiary Sources

*Sources that provide thirdhand information, such as wikis; not allowed for research paper*

# Types of sources

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