

RESEARCH SKILLS #1: TOPICS

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Information Literacy Learning.

TYPES OF RESEARCH

1. Search for individual facts or data.
 - How many cell phones are sold in the US every year?
2. A report, review or summary.
 - What is the history of the cell phone?
3. Gathering and analyzing a body of information and **extracting new meaning** from it.
 - Gather evidence to determine whether cell phone use is related to an increase in car accidents.

BEFORE YOU RESEARCH

- ◉ Understand the assignment
- ◉ Select a topic that interests you
 - If this isn't possible, find an ASPECT of the topic that seems interesting
- ◉ Select a topic you are already research for another project (if allowed)
- ◉ Select a topic not likely to be chosen by others
 - Be original

TOPIC VS. QUESTION

- ◉ HEALTHCARE
 - ◉ Will a public option lead to a reduction in medical services?
- ◉ CORPORATIONS and MEDIA
 - ◉ Does corporate owned-media stifle open debate on controversial issues?

TOPIC

QUESTION

WHY QUESTIONS?

- Questions require answers
 - Topics are too big and connect with too many issues
- Questions give you a way of evaluating evidence
 - Topics tempt you to stash information that might or might not be useful and can go on FOREVER
- OPEN-ENDED questions require *real* research and thinking
 - Topics tend to lead to frustration followed by a desire to cut and paste just to “get it done”

BROADENING YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

- ⦿ A too narrow question can make it difficult to find information.
- ⦿ Look at the terminology (keywords) used in your question.
- ⦿ Where can you change the keywords to something broader while still keeping meaning similar?

BROADENING YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

Original Question:

In the past six months, how has Twitter affected Global Connections students' essay writing?

Re-THINK keywords:

In the past six months, how has Twitter affected Global Connections students' essay writing?

BROADENING KEYWORDS

Re-THINK keywords:

In the past six months, how has Twitter affected Global Connections students' essay writing?

- ◉ past six months
- ◉ Twitter
- ◉ GC students
- ◉ essay writing
- ◉ eliminate or increase period
- ◉ technology
- ◉ American students/
Americans
- ◉ scholastic writing

BROADENING YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

Original Question:

In the past six months, how has Twitter affected Global Connections students' essay writing?

Broader Question:

How has technology affected American scholastic writing?

NARROWING YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

- ⦿ A too broad question can bring back too much information.

Question:

Is cell phone use bad?

Problems:

- ⦿ “bad”-value judgment: how does one determine what this means?
- ⦿ too broad-there might be a number of ways cell phone use has a negative impact in different places and with some populations

NARROWING STRATEGIES

Strategy	Explanation	Cell Phone Topic
Time	Since 1990? This year? In the future?	Cell phone-related car accidents over the <u>past five years</u> .
Place	The U.S., Mexico, Europe	Cell phone-related car accidents <u>in the U.S.</u>
Population	Gender, age, occupation, ethnicity, etc.	Cell phone-related car accidents <u>among teen drivers</u>
Viewpoint	<u>Social</u> , legal, ethical, economic, political, philosophical?	The <u>safety benefits</u> of requiring hands free cell phone use

IDENTIFY ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

- ◉ Identify the essential concepts in your research question.

Question 1:

- ◉ How has text messaging affected American scholastic writing?

Question 2:

- ◉ Would a law restricting cell phones in cars significantly decrease the number of accidents among teens in the US?

IDENTIFY ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

- ⦿ Computers do NOT understand natural language
- ⦿ Cut out the subtext
- ⦿ Avoid ambiguity
- ⦿ Focus ONLY on the main concepts

IDENTIFY ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

Search Snags	Advice
“ media coverage of 9/11 ”	Media <i>cover</i> events. Unless the media <i>caused</i> the event, this term is unnecessary.
Advantages of home schooling over public schools	Value words like “favorite”, “advantage”, or “better” are not useful if you need to gather <i>evidence</i> to help you make a decision or develop a solution. Don’t just grab an opinion or the “right” answer off someone else’s shelf.
dissertations about bioethics	Many databases and search engines are programmed to ignore common words that don’t impact a search. These are called “stopwords” and typically include terms like “the,” “from,” “about,” “when,” etc.

IDENTIFY ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

- ◉ Identify the essential concepts in your research question.

Question 1:

- ◉ How has **text messaging** affected **American scholastic writing**?

Question 2:

- ◉ Would a **law** restricting **cell phones in cars** significantly decrease the number of **accidents** among **teens** in the **US**?

VOCABULARY CHART

- ◉ Searching using your essential concepts does not always bring thorough results.
- ◉ Make a chart using broadening and narrowing vocabulary.
- ◉ This will set you up for much better and faster searching.

VOCABULARY CHART

How has **text messaging** affected **American scholastic writing**?

Essential Concept	Broader	Related	Narrower
Text messaging	Technology, computers, communication, digital communication	Cell phones, email	Twitter, Facebook, MySpace
American	Industrialized nations, North American, Western nations	United States (of America), National	Local, Washington, Seattle, Pacific Northwest, King County, etc.
Scholastic writing	Discourse, Writing, Communication	Academic writing, School papers, education writing , didactic writing	Essay, research papers, narratives, journals, ethnographies

VOCABULARY CHART

Would a **law** restricting **cell phones in cars** significantly decrease the number of **accidents** among **teens** in the **US**?

Essential Concept	Broader	Related	Narrower
law	Legislature, Congress	driving laws, rules-of-the-road, driving safety, police	hands-free cell phone laws, cell phone restrictions
cell phones	electronic devices	radios, CD players, iPods, texting	Flip phones, blackberries
accidents		distractions, problems	car accidents, fender-benders, fatalities, negligent or reckless driving