

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## The Research Process: Define Your Information Need

### Topic Selection

An information need can be as basic as finding the address of a local deli or as complicated as finding scholarly information to support a challenging thesis. College research starts with an assignment from an instructor. The assignment can include requirements such as:

- An assigned topic
- A minimum number of pages
- A minimum number of resources
- A list of required information formats (books, articles, etc.)
- Specific due dates for parts of the research paper

What is your general topic? \_\_\_\_\_

### Presearch

Once a general topic is chosen or assigned, it is a very good idea to use some general information sources for preliminary information-gathering. General resources include:

- Encyclopedias. Good subject encyclopedias come in print and electronic formats and provide a broad overview of a topic, including historical perspectives and common subtopics. An especially good resource is CREDO Reference, located on the *Online Databases* page in the library website.
- The Internet. Read what other people have to say, find ideas for narrowing your topic. Make a note of common terminology associated with the topic.
- People. Find someone who is an expert on the topic you are researching and ask that person to answer questions you have about the topic.

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Where will you look to learn more about your topic? List at least 4 sources.

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### **Topic Focus**

After you've accumulated enough background information you should be able to narrow or focus your topic to fit the scope of your assignment.

If your topic was too broad, how can you focus it for this assignment?

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### **Thesis Statement or Research Question**

Next you'll need to draft a thesis statement, which tells the reader exactly what you hope to prove with your research, or a research question, which you hope to answer with your research.

Write your thesis statement or research question below.

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### **Keywords and Phrases**

Next look at your thesis statement or research question and identify the terminology that clearly addresses it. Write those words and phrases below, then think of related terminology or synonyms that you might also use to search for information.

Keywords/phrases

Related terminology/synonyms

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____