

Picking a Topic

Hi, it's Jennifer again. So you've got a paper to write, and you're not sure what to write about? In this short video, I'm going to discuss things to think about when picking a topic. Students often have difficulty deciding on a topic for a research paper, so let's concentrate on that first.

I would suggest thinking about some topics that really interest you—things you've always wanted to know more about but haven't had time to learn. Another consideration is originality. Try to find a topic that hasn't been tackled a thousand of times before—or at least find something to which you can add your own personal twist. I also suggest writing about controversial subjects—something that can be approached from at least two angles—and investigate both “sides.” If you like your topic, the paper will be more fun to write.

Some instructors will allow you to write about anything. If so, you're in luck! But others will give you a list of topics or simply expect you to write about a specific area. Either way, just put pen to paper and make a list of potential topics. At this stage, don't think too much about each idea; just let your ideas flow!

Next, pick your favorite from the topics you've come up with, and do a little research to make sure it isn't too narrow or too broad. For example, if you wanted to write about the history of the Universe, you'd probably have difficulty organizing and narrowing your thoughts. In that case, I would suggest narrowing your topic to something more manageable. The converse is also true. If your topic is too specific, you may have trouble finding good research, and it makes the paper difficult to write.

I hope I've helped you pick a topic. Ask your instructor for additional help if needed. Good luck!