

Project Connection

Selecting Your Topic

It is important to take some time before selecting a topic for your final project. Consider your options. Remember that research findings are only one of several components integral to your project. You must also take into consideration your thoughts, personal insights, and ideas about the findings, which are of equal importance.

Criteria for Selecting Your Topic

1. Characteristics of Unsuitable Topics

Apply good judgement, decision-making skills, and research techniques when selecting your topic. The success of your final project depends on it!

What follows is a list of criteria that will help you to determine if a subject you are considering is unsuitable.

A. The necessary research cannot be completed in the time allocated.

Although a subject may strike you as particularly compelling, you may find that the research cannot be completed in the time allocated. For example, consider the following topic: *Does a particular new brand of golf ball travel farther than other golf balls?* Now, imagine it's February and all the local golf courses are closed for the season. How will you be able to determine the distance each golf ball can achieve if there are no golfers from which to obtain data?

B. The topic does not lend itself to research.

Consider this topic: *How many kilometres can an airplane fly before it crashes?* No commercial airline would allow a particular airplane to fly if there were even the slightest chance the plane might crash. As a result, it would be impossible to research this topic.

C. The topic is only information-based.

Suppose you wanted to find out what university or college had the highest entry requirements. Although the information you seek may be readily available, there is nothing to prove. This topic is only information-based; it would not enable you to predict future trends.

D. The topic is inappropriate.

Topics that may offend members of the audience to whom you will be presenting your research findings must be avoided. There are many inappropriate topics, so consider your choice carefully and consult with your teacher before deciding to pursue a specific topic.

2. Criteria for Suitable Topics

You should carefully select a topic that you want to learn more about. Shown below are some criteria that can be used to help you select your topic.

A. Think about your purpose.

Your purpose is to convince others of your perspective on a given topic.

Make sure that, for any topic you choose, there are at least two sides to the issue for which you can find data, allowing you to argue one side or the other.

B. Always select a topic that interests you.

You will find completing this project a lot more fun and interesting if you are dealing with a topic that interests you. A topic that you find boring or tedious will make working on your project less enjoyable than it otherwise might be.

C. Be practical.

Make sure there is sufficient information and research completed for your topic. The earlier example of how far airplanes can fly before they crash is not practical. However, researching whether airplanes fly with too much fuel on board might be more practical.

D. Beware of “popular” topics.

A new, “popular” topic may be exciting, but it may also be so new that there is no current research available, or the research that people have done is so preliminary that nothing can be trusted.

E. Consider your audience.

You will be presenting your research to people in your class. Make sure that your topic will be interesting to others in your class so that they will be more attentive to your presentation. For example, students in your class may not be interested in the history of calculus. However, they might be interested in how fashion affects school spirit.

F. Do not think that every question needs to be answered.

Your topic may raise more questions than you can possibly answer. However, do not eliminate a topic simply because you may not be able to find all the answers. You are presenting a position only.

3. Create Your List of Topics

Make a list of topics that may interest you. In the next chapter, you will be asked to select a topic from the list and create a question that you would like to answer. At this point, however, simply select topics that you would like to research further; subjects are general ideas only!