

How to narrow your original topic down.

Try to make your topic too narrow, narrower than you thought possible. You want to say more about less, not less about more.

Example: I'm thinking of doing a paper on "**fashion.**" This topic could develop in many different ways.

Hint: Ask Yourself Questions About Your Topic:

- What **do** you know about it? What **don't** you know?
- **What kind of information** do you need?
 - a brief summary or a lengthy explanation?
 - periodical articles, books, essays, encyclopedia articles?
 - statistics?
- What **time period** do you want to cover?
- On what **geographic region** do you want to focus?
- On what **person or group of people** do you want to focus?
- What **particular aspects** of your topic interest you: historical, sociological, psychological, etc.?
- Or what **particular event** within your topic would illustrate your primary point?

Now, limit the category you are writing about three times by choosing a sub-category to focus on. (See the chart below.)

Sample Topic Narrowing Chart:

General Topic:	Fashion
Period of Time:	1920s
Place:	US; urban; big cities (not rural)
Person or group:	youth; college age
Particular Aspects or Event:	sexual attitudes; behavior; sociological
Narrowed Research Question:	What did American youth fashion of the 1920s say about sexual mores?