

# Research

Getting started:  
Choosing a topic with a high  
degree of focus.

**SPI 3002.4.1** Select the research topic  
with the highest degree of focus.

Three methods to use to make sure your topic has a high degree of focus:

- Create a chart or list of associated issues
- Use a “mind map” (webbing)
- Freewriting

# Creating a chart or list of associated issues

Step One: Brainstorm the issues associated with your subject.

For example: Your subject is animal cruelty. What are some issues associated with animal cruelty?

- The definition of cruelty
- Preventing animal cruelty
- The penalties/punishments
- Neglect vs. physical abuse
- Laws about animal cruelty
- Organizations that enforce animal cruelty laws
- Specific animals or organizations with highest abuse potential
  - Circuses
  - Puppy Mills

# Creating a chart or list of associated issues (continued)

Step Two: Choose ONLY ONE of the issues you wrote on your list.

- Specific Organizations: Puppy Mills

Step Three: Brainstorm some more issues associated with your topic.

- Definition of puppy mills
- Statistics of cruelty cases associated with puppy mills
- Laws and organizations that deal with puppy mills
- Actions a person can take to prevent the cruelty associated with puppy mills

# Creating a chart or list of associated issues (continued)

Step Four: Revise your topic into a question or a working title.

- Should puppy mills be illegal?
- Puppy Mills: A Terrible Way to Start a Life

Step Five: Do some research to see if other writers have narrowed the focus even more.

# Mind-mapping (webbing)

# Freewriting

- Freewriting allows you to get your thoughts down on paper without worrying about grammar, punctuation, spelling, or any of those other rules.
- Often, when freewriting, you find yourself writing about the aspect of your subject that you're really interested in.
- This will help you narrow your topic (increase your focus).

The information on the following slides was taken from the following source:

“Writing Tips: Narrow Your Topic.”  
*Intermediate Writing For ESL Students.* Continuing Studies, University of Victoria, n.d. Web. 18 July 2011.

# The 4 S's: Single

Single: Make sure you are focused and writing about one topic and one topic only.

- ***The popularity of coffee bars and video arcades*** does not have a single focus.
- ***Coffee bars are very popular in my home town*** does have a single focus.

# The 4 S's: Significant

- Significant: Your subject should be meaningful to your readers and yourself. It should be worthy of the time and attention you will spend writing it and others will spend reading it.
  - ***Why I like cotton shirts*** is not very interesting.
  - ***Why it is healthier to wear cotton*** is more interesting and your readers may learn something.

# The 4 S's: Specific

- Specific: You want your topic to be narrow and specific topic rather than broad and general. Broad generalizations are not as interesting as concrete, specific details. Furthermore, a broad generalization is usually too much to try to write about.
  - *Children in sports* is too general.
  - *Child tennis stars* is a more specific topic.
- If your topic is broad and general, you haven't finished working on it yet.

# The 4 S's: Supportable

- Supportable: Remember that you have to include specific examples, facts, figures, quotations, stories, and other supporting details.
  - ***Yellow is the best color.*** This sentence is completely insupportable because it's based entirely on opinion.
  - ***Certain colors can affect and alter a person's mood.*** There is room for both doubt and support with this statement.

# Which research topics have the highest degree of focus?

- Modern-Day Pioneers.
- The War in Afghanistan.
- Marie Curie's contributions to science.
- Nature in Emily Dickinson's poems.
- Problems encountered by the Space Station *Mir*.
- Football scholarships.
- The risks associated with gastric bypass surgery.

# Which research topics have the highest degree of focus?

- Modern-Day Pioneers. (Low degree)
- The War in Afghanistan. (Low degree)
- Marie Curie's contributions to science. (Low degree)
- Nature in Emily Dickinson's poems. (High degree)
- Problems encountered by the Space Station *Mir*. (Low degree)
- Football scholarships. (High degree)
- The risks associated with gastric bypass surgery. (High degree)