

Topic Refinement Activity

Learning outcome: You can refine your topic in order to develop effective research questions and information seeking plans.

Directions: You will be searching for background information on a topic of your choice. It is best if you use a topic you are considering for your annotated bibliography or research paper. Follow the instructions on each page. If you have questions, ask your librarian or instructor for help.

When you are finished with the activity, make sure you submit your responses before you leave class. This will ensure your work is submitted *and* it will send you a copy of your answers.

What is your English 101 section number?

[Pull-down menu with choices from 1 to 100]

What is your name?

First name: _____

Last name: _____

What is your email address? This will only be used to send you a copy of the work you do today.

Record the research topic, question, or thesis you are exploring today and one question you have about it as a starting point.

Presearching will help you in refining your topic. Find a resource to use for presearch by going to the [Presearch Libguide](#) and selecting a database from the "General Online Reference Resources" box.

Once you have selected a database, search for an article related to your topic.

Which database did you use?

- Oxford
- Sage
- Gale
- CQ
- Wikipedia

Record the citation information about your resource:

Source title/name (example: "Encyclopedia of Sports"): _____

Title of entry (example: "History of Tennis"): _____
Author (if listed): _____

Read or skim the entry/article, and list two things you learned about your topic:

First thing learned: _____

Second thing learned: _____

Based on what you learned, how can you refine your topic? You can refine a topic by considering things like geographic region, time period, discipline, and/or population or group of people.

For example: An original topic of "The Alamo" could become, "Politicians of the early 20th century used stories of the Battle of the Alamo to influence elections and pass legislation."

To continue with the activity, please select the option below that applies to your class:

I have not been assigned to find an additional article or book about my refined topic.

I have been assigned to find a second article or a book about my refined topic.

[

At this point, the activity will branch into a short and a long version.]

[Short version]

Using your refined topic, and based on what you learned during presearching, what are some key words or phrases you could use to find more information about your topic? Brainstorm as many keywords as you can. (Hint: These should be one- or two-word phrases.)

What questions do you still have about your research? Record any questions or comments below.

Concerning your questions/comments, would you like to receive a reply from:

- Your librarian
- Your instructor
- Both
- No one

[Long version]

Find a source related to your refined topic.

Which database did you use to find your source?

- Search It
- Academic Search Complete
- JSTOR
- Other: _____

What did you type in the search box? (Hint: You can copy and paste from the database search box.)

Source information

Source title/name: _____
Title of journal, magazine, newspaper article (if applicable): _____
Author (if listed): _____

What questions do you still have about your research? Record any questions or comments below.

10. Concerning your questions/comments, would you like to receive a reply from:

- Your librarian
- Your instructor
- Both
- No one