### Worksheet for Choosing a Research Topic & Developing a Thesis Statement

#### Step #1 - Beginning your research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your research goal or assignment?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Write a 5-page APA style paper on a topic of my choice. Make sure you understand the assignment!</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>How many pages do you need to write?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Example: 5 pages</td>
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<tr>
<th>What sources can you use (reference, websites, books, journal articles, audio-visual materials)?</th>
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<td>Example: I need to use 3-5 references, with at least 2 journal articles.</td>
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#### Step #2 - Focusing

- Choose a topic that interests you and will sustain your interest
- Keep the topic manageable—narrow and focused enough to be interesting, but broad enough to find enough information for the assignment
- Look for either:
  - “a point you can argue for or against,
  - an idea you can compare or contrast,
  - a cause and effect relationship you can explain,
  - a main point that can be defined and divided into sub-points,
  - or a question you can answer”
- Think like a journalist to probe your topic more closely with the following questions: who? What? When? Where? How? And why?
- Be flexible—the topic might need to be modified (narrowed or broadened) depending on the information available
- Brainstorm your ideas by writing them down—let your thoughts flow—list 3 possible topical ideas below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Topic Ideas—Brainstorming</th>
<th>Can you narrow the topic down even more?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Example: “Healthcare Professionals”</em></td>
<td><em>Example: “Nurses” and “Nurse training programs”</em></td>
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</table>

**Step #3—Exploring**

- Discuss your ideas with your teacher or a reference librarian
- Browse your text book for paper ideas
- Check out the “elibrary” database through the LIRN (Library and Information Resource Network, [www.lirn.net](http://www.lirn.net)) to find general reference information about your top three ideas for background information
- Browse through the research databases (found through the LIRN) for ideas and even more background information
- Pick out major concepts or keywords from every source you browse—identify synonyms and broader and narrower terms
  - Collect these keywords for later research—they are excellent search terms
  - **Example: Broad topic: Nursing**
    - Keywords found through researching: “training”, “career”, “education”, “history”, “neonatal”
    - Each of these key words can help narrow my paper’s topic or add to it
  - Test your topics by searching the library’s books and magazines, as well as, research databases to determine how much information is readily available on them:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refined Topics</th>
<th>Sources consulted for ideas</th>
<th>Keywords, synonyms identified</th>
<th>Library results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: “Nursing” Refined: How to become a nurse, what education is involved, and career outlook.</td>
<td>Example: Elibrary, the LIRN, magazines, the Librarian</td>
<td>Example: “Training”, “Career”, “Education”</td>
<td>Example: Nursing magazine (in library), ORNurse magazine (in library), databases (virtual library)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step#4-Developing a thesis statement**

- As you read about your topic you have chosen, write down questions that come to mind about the topic
- Define your topic as a focused research question
- Compose a draft thesis statement—one or two sentences that convey the focus, purpose, and meaning of your research
A thesis statement:
1. “is specific”
2. “is an assertion, not a statement of fact or observation”
3. “takes a stand rather than announces a subject”
4. “is the main idea, not the title of the paper”
5. “is sufficiently narrow so that it can be supported”
6. “makes a promise to the reader about the scope, purpose, and direction of your paper”
7. “identifies the relationships between the pieces of evidence that you are using to support your argument”
8. “states the conclusion that you have reached about your topic”

While you are conducting your research, ask yourself how the information you are gathering helps to answer your research question or support your thesis statement.

The thesis may evolve as you “develop new insights, find new evidence, or take a different approach to your topic”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Topic</th>
<th>Thesis Statement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Example: Nurse Training Programs and how education and training reflects in the career field.</td>
<td>Example: After reviewing current Nurse Training Programs and research conducted on nurses presently working in the job field, this paper will describe how these educational programs aren’t realistically preparing future nurse practitioners to enter the job field straight after graduation.</td>
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</table>
Step#5-Committing to your topic/Changing your topic

- If through this process, you find you are no longer interested in your topic, find another one
- If you must abandon your topic< DO IT EARLY RATHER THAN LATER-it will be much more difficult to start anew if you wait
- Maintaining an interest in your topic is crucial to a successful research project

Need some help?
Contact the Librarian, Ms. Amelia at
Email: akallaher@southerntech.edu
In-person: Monday through Friday in the Learning Resource Center
Virtual reference desk: www.askalibrarian.org

To ask Ms. Amelia for help via live chat

1. Go to www.askalibrarian.org
2. Click on “Choose your Florida Library”
3. Select “Southern Technical College”
4. Select “Chat with a Librarian”
5. Enter in your information and reference question addressed to “Ms. Amelia”

To ask Ms. Amelia for help via text
Southern Technical College

Text us @ 407.490.3707 stc. Enter stc as the first three characters of the text, and then type your question. You should receive a reply within minutes!