

FOCUSING YOUR TOPIC

What?

What's the general subject area you want to research?
Examples: Healthcare, politics, the environment, finance, etc. Write it on the widest line of the pyramid.

Who?

Do you want to focus your research on a particular group? Examples: Latinos, killer whales, college students, women, Democrats, etc. Write it on the next line.

Where?

Is there a location where you'd like to focus your research? Examples: Arizona, Amazon rainforest, Germany, Pacific Rim, etc. Write it on the next line.

When?

What time period will you focus on? Examples: 19th century, the Reagan presidential administration, the Middle Ages, post-Watergate, etc. Write it on the next line.

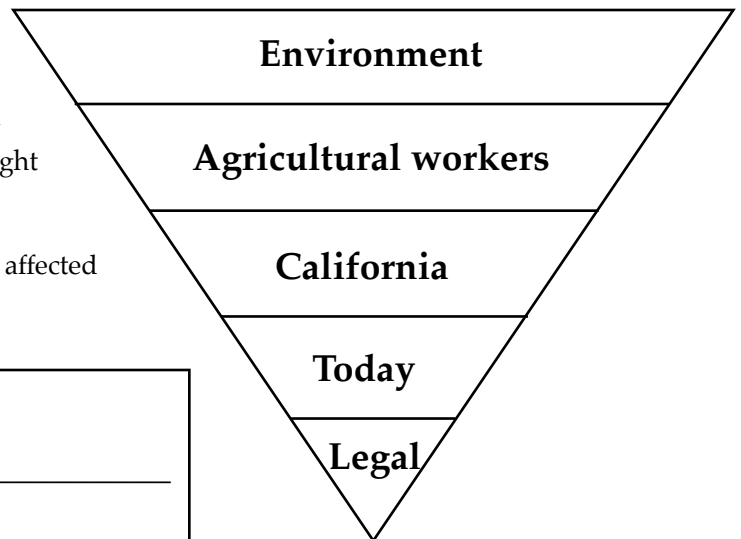
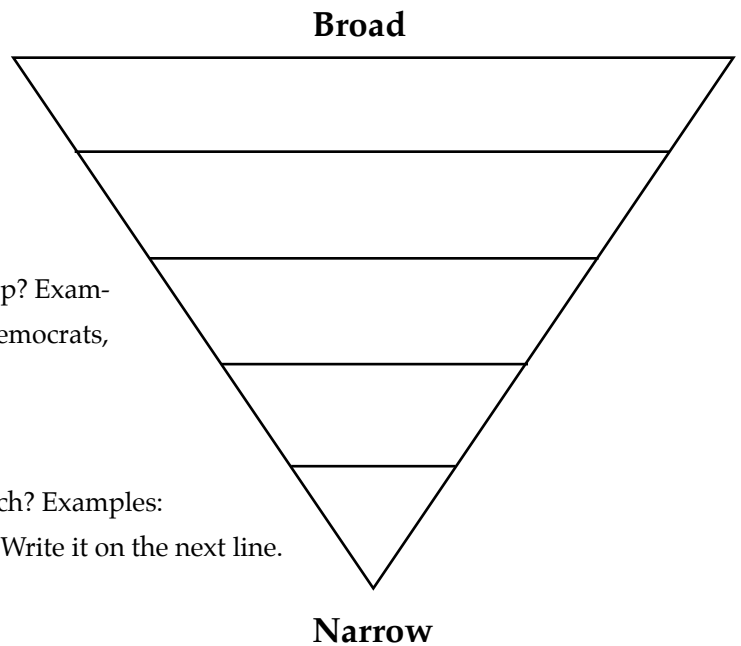
POV?

From which point of view would you like to view your topic? Examples: Economic, legal, political, ethical, scientific, religious, historical, psychological, etc. Write it on the final line.

Put the pieces together

Combine the words in your pyramid to define your research topic. If necessary, tweak it a bit to form a solid question. From the sample pyramid at the right, you might formulate this research question:

"How have recent changes in environmental legislation affected agricultural workers in California?"



What's your research question? Write it here:

?



Finding the best words

Simplify your research! Identify keywords and subject headings related to your topic.

Finding keywords

Do some brainstorming and/or search a library database such as Credo Reference to find keywords to describe your topic.

Write your keywords in this box:

| |
|----------|
| 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ |

Locating Library of Congress subject headings

GCC Library resources and many database articles are assigned standardized Library of Congress subject headings. Finding the LC subject heading/s for your research topic will save time and yield more on-target materials. Note: Library subject headings sometimes aren't similar to the terms you would use to describe your topic.

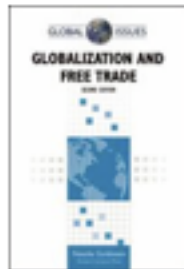
Examples:

| YOUR KEYWORD/S | LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SUBJECT HEADING |
|---------------------------|---|
| World War II | World War, 1939-1945 |
| Gun control | Firearms -- Law and legislation -- United States |
| Immigration reform | United States -- Emigration and immigration -- Government policy |
| Animal rights | Speciesism |

How do you find Library of Congress subject headings for your research topic?

- Start at the GCC Library catalog: is.gd/searchcat
- Enter one or two of the keywords you've identified in the search box and press **Search**. (Example: Globalization)

- Scan through your search results until you locate a resource that focuses on your research topic. Click on its title link to see the full record.



Title

Globalization and free trade

Goldstein, Natalie.

2012

Glendale CC North Library Glendale CC Library

Call Number HF1418.5 .G645 2012

Format

- Scroll down to the **Subject term** list. Which of these are most relevant for your research topic?
- Write them in the box on the next page.
- Then click on the most relevant subject heading on the list to quickly search for more on-target library resources. *Tip: Try searching without subheadings (you would not include **Case studies** in the example on the right) to find even more relevant resources.*

Title: Globalization and free trade Global issues Global issues (Facts on File, Inc.).

Author: Goldstein, Natalie.

Publication Information: New York : Facts On File, c2012.

Preferred Shelf Number: HF1418.5 .G645 2012

Edition: 2nd ed.

ISBN: 9780816083657

Series: Global issues Global issues (Facts on File, Inc.).

Physical Description: xvii, 428 p. ; 24 cm.

Subject Term:

International economic integration -- Case studies.

Globalization -- Economic aspects -- Case studies.

Free trade -- Case studies.

Write the most relevant LC subject headings you find in this box:

| |
|----------|
| 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ |

Good news!

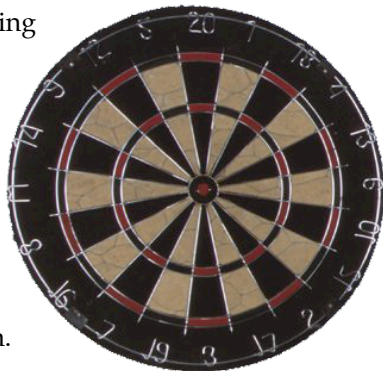
Most of the library databases also use Library of Congress subject headings. Try entering the subject headings you've listed above when you're searching for articles.

Refocus to hit your target

How many on-target resources such as books, ebooks, database articles, streaming videos, and quality websites can you find using the keywords and LC subject headings you've written in the boxes above?

If you aren't finding excellent resources, return to your focusing pyramid and tweak your research question.

Try changing one or more of the lines and search again. Repeat this until you've developed a research question with the keywords and subject headings that will help you find excellent resources to support your research.



Need help? Ask us!

Reference Desks — 623-845-3112 (Main)
623-888-7112 (North)

Ask-a-Librarian — is.gd/ask247 (a shortcut to maricopa.edu/askalibrarian)