

Choosing a Research Topic

Do Not Pick a Topic at the Beginning



If you can at all avoid it, do not pick a research topic right away.

Choosing a Research Topic

Read...a lot

Pick a different subject every few days and read everything you can about it.



Textbooks



MS theses and
PhD dissertations



Websites



Journal Articles

Choosing a Research Topic

Best Resources When New to a Subject

Look first at textbooks, theses, dissertations, and the internet.



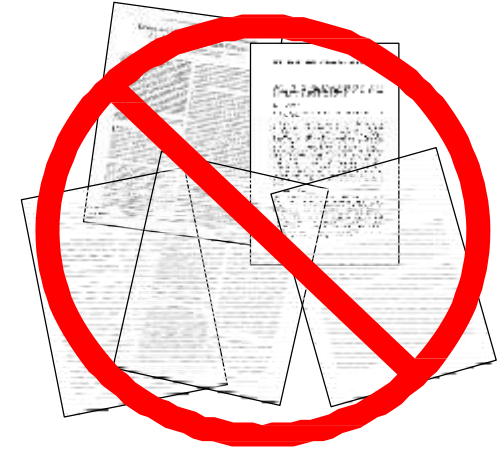
Textbooks



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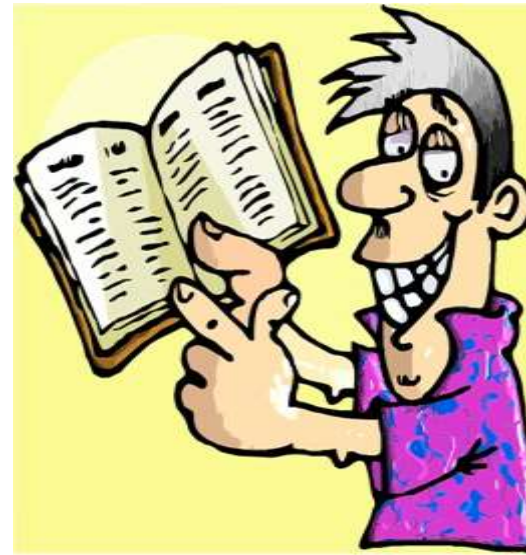
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Only Read the Good Stuff

Observe what subjects interest you the most. Dig deeper into those subjects and keep reading those.



Stop reading the stuff you do not like.



Read more of the things you like.

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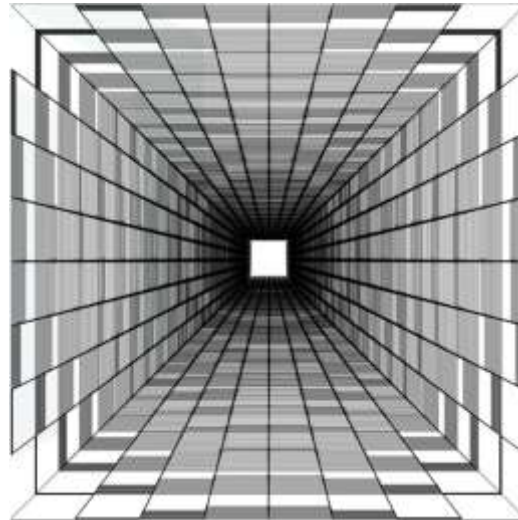
Keep Reading



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Nearing the End

At some point, it will become difficult to find new information. You will be left with curiosities and unanswered questions you cannot find answers to.



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The Beginnings of a Research Topic

Let the curiosities and unanswered questions be the seeds of your eventual research topic.



The Ideal Research Topic

- The subject intensely interests you.
- Lots of opportunities to generate new knowledge.
- Is an emerging area with excellent potential for your future career.
- Is a significant topic with lots of interest from others.
- Your university and advisor have all the resources you need to do research in that area.
- Your university or advisor has a strong reputation in your topic area.



Choosing a Research Topic



Be Careful...



Be cautious about interpreting any of the following as signs of being a good subject.

- Mature subject area.
- Lots of learning materials.
- Lots of people at your university working on that same topic.
- Low risk of failure.