



Kids InfoBits Toolbox – Choosing a Topic

The ***Kids InfoBits Toolbox*** tip sheets are designed to help young researchers prepare a written report. This document will help you **choose a topic** for your report.

Need more help with your report? Visit <http://solutions.cengage.com/gale-training/materials/tip-sheets/> for more **Kids InfoBits Toolbox Tip Sheets!**

The very first thing that you must do to begin writing a report is to choose the topic. Choosing a topic can be very much like making other choices in your life. Sometimes you have a lot to choose from, other times you don't. For example, your mom and dad may want you to complete some chores at home. Sometimes they are very specific and say things like...

Feed the dog!



Mow the lawn!



Those are specific chores. You know exactly what to do. Other times, parents may say things like...

Our house is a mess and Aunt Mary is coming. Help clean up!



That is a general chore. You can probably see a lot that needs to be done, but you could start in the kitchen, the bathroom, or in your bedroom.

There is also another possibility. Maybe your big sister will say, "Our friends are coming. We need to clean the downstairs part of the house because we want to watch TV and make a snack." That lets you know that much of the house needs to be cleaned, but not all of it. It also does not tell you specifically where to start. This is in between specific and general.

Your teacher can give an assignment to write a report in much the same way. Sometimes the topic will be specific; sometimes it will be general and other times it will be in between. Here are some sample assignments that range from general to specific.

General: Write a report about an animal.

This is a general topic. It means that you have a lot of choice about what you will write about, as long as it's an animal. If you wrote a report about your favorite artist, it wouldn't count. That would be like doing your homework when your parents asked you to help clean. Helping to clean and doing your homework are both great things to do, but they are clearly not the same thing.



In Between: Write a report about a mammal.

This is kind of assignment isn't specific, but it's not really a general topic either. The teacher didn't tell you which animal you had to write about but you do have to pick a mammal. Your choices are fewer than you would have with a general topic.

If your teacher has given a specific topic, you are ready to begin your research. If you have a general topic or an in between topic, you will need to think about the types of choices you can make. Before you begin writing, you must have a specific topic in mind. Think of it this way. If you are asked by your mom to mow the lawn, you know that you will need to go the garage, get out the lawn mower, and begin the chore. If you are asked to help clean the house, you can't begin until you decide what to begin cleaning.



Specific: Write a report about cats.

This is a specific topic. It is like your parents telling you to clean your room. It doesn't mean that you can vacuum the living room instead and still make your parents happy. It only counts if you clean your room.

Your teacher wants you to write about cats. That doesn't mean that you could write just about what cats eat. You need to write lots of things about cats like how many kinds of cats there are, how many people keep them as pets, and much more.



Whichever type of assignment you have, it's not hard to choose a topic if you think about the assignment. You can use a worksheet to help you decide if you have a specific topic, a general topic, or something in between.

You can download a **Choose a Topic Worksheet** here: <http://assets.cengage.com/training/ChoosingTopicWksht.pdf>

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