

## The I-Search Paper: Choosing a Topic

The goal: choose a topic for the I-Search paper. Here are some guidelines.....

- ❑ *Let your topic choose you* by allowing yourself to respond to whatever your instincts tell you. Follow your gut.
- ❑ Be *curious*. Our world is rich and complex with a variety of ideas, people and activities. Hopefully you *want to learn* about a wide variety of things!
- ❑ Step outside of yourself. *Do not be afraid to learn* something you wouldn't normally do.
- ❑ Your topic must be *realistic*. It has to be something you can teach yourself, essentially, in about three weeks.
- ❑ Your topic should be something you can learn about using sources that are not just in books and on the internet. *You must be able to talk with real people*, and experience the subject in a real way.
- ❑ The topic should be *relevant to you*; you must care about it. The single most important aspect of this assignment is that you find something you are *truly curious* about.
- ❑ **Important:** once you find a topic, *identify a question that you will pursue*. The **title** of your paper should be a specific question that you will answer during your search.

Some sample topics to consider:

- ★ How does recycling work in my county?
- ★ How has (name of a politician) shaped our nation's policies?
- ★ What is required for (my dad, or a relative) to run for local office?
- ★ How could (someone you know) go to (name a country) and what would his/her experience there be like?
- ★ What is in the food I eat?

Schedule:

### Week 1:

- ❖ Commit to an idea for a topic. This is not an arbitrary decision (“oh, I guess I’ll research that”)instead, this should be something you really care about.
- ❖ Once you have an idea for the topic, *you must find an approach, a question*. How you ask your question and what you want to learn are very important. “Is being a celebrity all it’s cracked up to be?” “How does someone become a major league umpire?” “Is it possible to end the pollution in the oceans,?” “How does money affect the world,” and so on....

### What to do once you have a topic:

- ❖ It’s time to gather information. Find information on the internet and in books and magazines in the media center.
- ❖ If there isn’t enough information in the library, create a plan for gathering information. Ask, “who can I interview?” “What agencies can I contact?” What kinds of questions should you ask people about your topic? Create a plan.

### Week 2:

### What does the writing look like?

- ❖ **Phase one:** take notes. Take more notes. We will be copying quotes and paraphrasing in the classroom. You may use index cards or the pages I will provide for your notes. Document what you read and what you think. These notes can be in note form or freewriting.
- ❖ **KEEP CAREFUL RECORDS OF ALL THE SOURCES YOU USE.** DOCUMENT. DOCUMENT. DOCUMENT EVERYTHING! I will be checking sources almost daily through this whole process.
- ❖ Remember: this paper is a narrative. Your paper will be told/written like a story. Use your own voice. Use dialogue. You can use figurative language if it’s appropriate, to make your writing engaging.

**You will need a Works Cited page.**

- ❖ Keep a record of the sources you use. The minimum number of sources is five, but more is better.

**Do you need note cards?**

- ❖ Keep your notes as suits you best. Everything, the whole process for this project, including all the notes and drafts, will be submitted in a two pocket folder. When the time comes, you will be given a specific format on how to submit the project. Wait for it!

***All students must conduct an interview with a person you do not know well. Plan to do this next week!***

## INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

### PREPARATIONS

1. Arrange appointments in advance.
2. Research your subject before interviewing.
3. Make a list of thought-provoking questions; i.e. ones that will encourage the person to talk and elaborate. Avoid YES or NO questions.
4. Decide on how to start the interview. Have a plan.

### CONDUCTION THE INTERVIEW-- **always be courteous.**

1. Be punctual. Whether you're interviewing in person, or online; be on time.
2. Introduce yourself and what you are doing (use eye contact! It shows you care).
3. Be interested in what he or she shares with you.
4. Avoid interrupting.
5. Don't be afraid to go off topic during an interview, you can always steer back to the topic with a direct question.
6. Verify your notes or anything you are uncertain about before ending the interview.
7. BE THANKFUL. SAY "THANK YOU."
8. Take lots of notes
  - a. Check the spelling of names
  - b. Some things that you remember later can be added later.

### **ACCURACY IS CRITICAL**

