Recommendations from your friendly librarians at the Eugene McDermott Library . . .

- **SELECT A TOPIC THAT INTERESTS YOU**, not necessarily the one you think will please your instructor. After all, you’re at a university, expanding your intellectual horizons. Selecting a topic that interests you will show in your work. Even if you *think* you know all there is to know on a topic, you probably don’t. Remember, thanks to the library, you now have virtually all the resources you can imagine to exhaustively research any topic.

- **PLACES FOR IDEA STARTERS** . . .

  Still struggling to choose a topic? Try one or all of the following:

  - **News sites**: Mainstream news sites and newspapers and magazines (online or physical) are a great way to get a grasp on current events. Most are divided into sections on major subjects: science, technology, medicine and health, education, and more. For more help, check out this directory of major mainstream news sources and news aggregators here: [https://www.utdallas.edu/library/research-instruction/websites/#news](https://www.utdallas.edu/library/research-instruction/websites/#news)

  - **Science blogs**: These are typically maintained by practicing scientists and are written in language understandable by the layperson. They are an excellent resource for ideas in the scientific fields: medicine, health, the environment, technology, and more. Moreover, you can gather excellent keywords to search in library resources. For suggestions, try the blogs listed here: [https://www.utdallas.edu/library/research-instruction/websites/#science](https://www.utdallas.edu/library/research-instruction/websites/#science)

  - **Personal interest**: Do you have a hobby you are passionate about? Is there a subject you love to study? What intrigues you about your major? A subject or topic in which you are personally invested is almost always a good research starter. Regardless of how well you may know the topic, be sure to look for more information on it. Speaking of . . .

- **GET SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION** . . .

  - If you decide to use **Google** for background information, select what sites you visit *wisely*. Results from **government websites (gov)** and most **educational websites (edu)** carry more credibility and scholarly weight than personal blogs and opinion pieces. Plus, the good ones will credit the sources they employ. In short, be critical and use common sense when you Google!

  - **Wikipedia** can give an excellent introduction to a topic and provide you with good keywords. Even better are entries that provide citations to resources for more information. However, as a crowdsourced resource that depends on free labor, Wikipedia is not always very thorough, can suffer from errors or unsubstantiated (uncited) information, and, depending on the topic, can exhibit an agenda or heavy bias. As good as Wikipedia can be, it should not be your *only* or *final* source for information. Finally, that leads us to . . .
- **Encyclopedias and online reference (library) sources**

Online encyclopedias and reference sources will grant you a different perspective than **Wikipedia**. Moreover, articles in these sources are typically authored by degreed subject experts, are objective (don’t have an agenda), and provide citations and/or links to additional information.

Go to the “**Databases**” tab from the library homepage (https://www.utdallas.edu/library/):

![Databases Tab](https://www.utdallas.edu/library/)

**A-Z Databases List:** [https://libguides.utdallas.edu/az.php](https://libguides.utdallas.edu/az.php)

Click the corresponding letter of the resource.

Particularly for **scientific** and **technical** topics, we suggest the resource in **red**:

- **AccessScience**: McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science & Technology

- **Credo Reference**

- **Gale Opposing Viewpoints in Context**

- **Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL)**

- **Oxford Reference Online (ORO)**

- **TALK TO YOUR INSTRUCTOR OR A LIBRARIAN**. After trying the options above, if you are still struggling, get **in-person help**. Try your instructor, a librarian, or help from the **Writing Center** (MC 1.310, [https://www.utdallas.edu/studentsuccess/writing-and-speaking/writing-center/](https://www.utdallas.edu/studentsuccess/writing-and-speaking/writing-center/)). Sometimes brainstorming and discussing ideas aloud can be key to finding the right topic.