

If a topic has no clear boundaries, it can become endless and will usually lack focus and depth. Therefore, you should define your research objective as precisely as possible to help manage your time, your sources, and the intended length of your writing assignment. The following criteria are meant to help you narrow down your topic in a sensible and well-founded manner. They can also help you prepare for a consultation with your professor.

In the table below, you can find a general catalogue of criteria in the left column and specific examples of options in the right column that were selected for a writing assignment about "The role of the father in the medical records of chronically ill children".

On the next page, we have provided a blank table that you can fill in with aspects relevant to your own writing assignment. While doing this, you may realize that one aspect sparks your interest in particular, that one might be less relevant for your topic, or that you would like to find out more about something first in order to make a decision. Make a note of these thoughts. You can also highlight the corresponding rows in different colors to make them stand out visually for later reference.

Criteria	Options to focus on
Selected aspect(s) within the chosen topic:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>only one disease</li> <li>both parents at work</li> </ul>
Temporal limitations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>age of the child</li> <li>investigation period</li> </ul>
Localization (cities, countries, institutions ...):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in Berlin</li> <li>in Europe</li> <li>in rural areas</li> </ul>
Set priorities/with special attention to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>highly performance-oriented fathers</li> <li>non-verbal interaction</li> </ul>
Specific groups of people:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>female children</li> <li>immigrating families</li> </ul>
According to discipline and research method:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>medical/social-psychological study</li> <li>statistical comparison</li> <li>qualitative investigation</li> </ul>
Specification of sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>German sources</li> <li>published after 1990</li> <li>from a certain perspective, e.g. feminism</li> <li>10 interviews</li> </ul>
According to theoretical approaches/authors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>psychoanalytical, systemic considerations</li> <li>with special attention to Carl Rogers' work</li> </ul>
Comparisons:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to healthy children</li> <li>to other cultures</li> </ul>
Emphasize individual case/example:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>case study</li> </ul>
Connect with new research results:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'father studies' (new branch of study)</li> <li>recent study from a clinic</li> </ul>
Only mention briefly for reference:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>historical milestones in the development of disease prevention in children</li> <li>comparison with other chronic illnesses</li> </ul>
Specify practical relevance (if applicable):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>personal practical experience in the field</li> <li>general relevance for medical practice</li> </ul>

Your topic:

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Selected aspect(s) within the chosen topic:	
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Localization (cities, countries, institutions ...):	
Set priorities/with special attention to:	
Specific groups of people:	
According to discipline and research method:	
Specification of sources:	
According to theoretical approaches/authors:	
Comparisons:	
Emphasize individual case or example:	
Connect with new research results:	
Only mention briefly for reference:	
Specify practical relevance (if applicable):	

Translation and compilation of this handout by Kai Fleischer, Juliane Homann and Julian Maresch (studierendenWERK BERLIN).  
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Feifer, Viktoria. (2015). "Die Eingrenzungstabelle". Technische Hochschule Nürnberg Georg Simon Ohm. URL: [https://www.th-nuernberg.de/fileadmin/abteilungen/sll/Dokumente/Schreibzentrum/Handouts/SZ\\_151210\\_Eingrenzungstabelle.pdf](https://www.th-nuernberg.de/fileadmin/abteilungen/sll/Dokumente/Schreibzentrum/Handouts/SZ_151210_Eingrenzungstabelle.pdf).  
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