

## Selecting a Topic

Take time to select a topic thoughtfully.

**Does this subject really interest you?** This project gives you the opportunity to select and design a major portion of your academic work. Choosing a subject of genuine interest will make the work interesting and valuable to you.

**Are mentors and ample sources of information readily available?** Material for your research should be obtainable. Most important, community members and experts in the field are essential resources, City and county libraries complement our limited high school resources. College, university, and state libraries expand your capability to retrieve data.

**Can a personally meaningful and challenging project be developed from this topic?**

Whether you create a product, present a performance, or perform a service you need to feel that the work you do is meaningful and challenging to you.

**Is the topic, along with the related project, one that you would want to present to an audience?** You must be willing to share your work with your teacher and with other students.

**Can you focus the topic?** It is better to have a focused topic that is fully developed than a broad topic that cannot be adequately covered in a paper of the length required for this assignment.

**Does this topic offer a challenge?** If you are conducting real research you will discover new material-new facts, new ideas, new opinions, new insights. Above all, you should select a topic that will allow you to go beyond your current base of knowledge, ideas, opinions and insights.

**Has the topic been agreed upon by the student, parent, and teacher?** It is important that your teacher, parents, and others involved in the project understand the expectations and plans for your project. Parents sign your project proposal to acknowledge their understanding of the project. To facilitate this communication, you will complete a formal project proposal describing where and from whom the research will be collected, what the paper might cover, and what kind of project the topic might generate.

## Topic/Thesis/Project-Product Samples

When choosing a senior project topic, refrain from selecting a topic that you think will be “easy.” Many seniors upon reflection, especially after seeing the topics of other students during the Senior Project presentations, regret having taken the “easy” path. As you are choosing your topic, keep in mind that you are not just writing a report. You must also do field work that relates to the topic. Here are examples of acceptable projects:

### Example #1

Topic: The Art of Cartooning

Thesis Statement: Cartooning can be a powerful tool to express ideas.

Project/Product: Take art lessons. Then, design a character for a mascot to be used by a school or neighborhood group. Present and explain your design to the organization.

### Example #2

Topic: Public Relations

Thesis Statement: Public relations are an important method to establish a positive link with the community.

Project/Product: Interview an expert who works in the field. Volunteer to organize a campaign to promote an event in your school or in your community.

### Example #3

Topic: Elder Care

Thesis Statement: Growing problem of elder abuse in our society needs to be addressed.

Project/Product: Volunteer at a nursing home. Interview a resident or caregiver. Create a video or photo journal documenting the problems and urging action to provide solutions.

### Example #4

Topic: Peer Pressure

Thesis Statement: Peer pressure influences young people in both positive and negative ways.

Project/Product: Write and direct a play highlighting important issues that you have learned through your research. Perform the play for a real audience.

### **Example #5**

Topic: Robotics

Thesis Statement: Robotics is a new technology essential to many aspects of life.

Project/Product: Create a model and enter a local competition.

### **Example #6**

Topic: Pollution

Thesis Statement: Pollution is increasingly dangerous for all life forms and detrimental to planet Earth.

Project/Product: Create a handbook about hazardous household materials and organize a neighborhood campaign to collect and properly dispose of such items.

Remember that your project/product must include one of the following:

- Dissemination of information to a real audience
- Involvement in an ongoing, challenging activity
- Presentation to a real audience outside the Senior Panel
- Participation that will lead to, or result in, certification

### **Note:**

Fieldwork must include a minimum of 15 hours outside the school day, as determined by the Senior Project Advisory Committee. This excludes the research portion of the Senior Paper, but it would include anything leading up to the completion of the project. In addition, you must keep an accurate and detailed log to record progress from start to finish. Expect ongoing spot checks of the fieldwork log. These will occur mid-February through the month of March.

# Plagiarism and How to Avoid It

## Definition

To plagiarize is to present another person's words or ideas as if they were your own. It is a form of stealing and is an extremely serious offense which can result in failure of a course or loss of credit for an assignment. It can be intentional or unintentional, but either way, it is still considered an offense.

## Guidelines to Avoid Plagiarism

1. Always give credit to the source of ideas and words that are not your own.
2. Document these sources accurately and completely (see "Documentation")
3. If you quote someone else, put the quoted material in quotation marks.
4. If you use someone else's ideas, tell whose ideas they are.
5. If you summarize or paraphrase someone else's words tell where you obtained the idea and the author of that idea.

## Taking Notes and Avoiding Plagiarism

1. Record the correct documentation as you take the notes (see "Taking Notes").
2. Be sure to include the source and all necessary information as you take the notes.  
Having to go back after you have finished with a source will add a great deal of extra time and effort, perhaps causing you to plagiarize.
3. Be consistent in your style of note taking. Using the correct format in this procedure will help to avoid problems (see "Preparing Note Cards").

## Examples of Plagiarism and Correct Version

ORIGINAL  
MATERIAL

“Wuthering Heights is the most remarkable novel in English. It is perfect and perfect in the rarest way: it is the complete bodying forth of an intensely individual apprehension of the nature of man and life. That is to say, the content is strange enough, indeed baffling enough, while the artistic expression of it is flawlessness.”

PLAGIARIZED

The most remarkable novel in English is Wuthering Heights. It brings forth an individual apprehension of the nature of man and life. Therefore, it is perfect in the rarest way. The artistic expression is flawless, but the content is strange, indeed baffling.