

Generate topics for your research paper with ChatGPT

ChatGPT can be a useful tool when it comes to deciding what your topic should be for a research paper.

It's **not** good for doing the actual searching because **it makes up sources**. See [I can't find the citations that ChatGPT gave me. What should I do?](#)

But you *can* use it to help you:

- Narrow down your topic ideas.
- Come up with keywords for searching in library databases.
- Construct a search strategy for those databases.
- Recommend possible library databases to use for your topic.

Here's how.

1. Sign up for a free account on ChatGPT (if you haven't already). Or go to <https://chat.openai.com> and log in to your account.
2. To prompt ChatGPT effectively, use this example:

*Act as an expert academic librarian. I'm writing a research paper for **[course]** and I need help coming up with a topic. I'm interested in topics related to **[subject]**. Please give me a list of 10 topic ideas related to that.*

Here's an example:

*Act as an expert academic librarian. I'm writing a research paper for **Sociology** and I need help coming up with a topic. I'm interested in topics related to **climate change**. Please give me a list of 10 topic ideas related to that.*

3. Now go to [ChatGPT](#) and paste in your prompt.

4. Look over the list it gives you and find one topic that you're interested in. If there isn't one, ask ChatGPT to give you more topics. Keep going until you find a topic you like.
5. Now tell ChatGPT which of those topics you want to use.

Example: *I like the topic, Climate Change Denial and its Societal Influence.*

Then it will give you some sub-topics or research questions. If it doesn't, ask for some.

6. Choose your specific research question from the list. If you don't like any of them, ask for more. Keep going until you find one you want to use.
7. Now you can tell ChatGPT which research question you're going to use. Ask it for some keywords to use when searching library databases.

Example: *My research question is going to be this: Investigate the role of social media and online communities in propagating climate change denial and misinformation. Please list some keywords I can use when searching library databases.*

8. You can use the keywords and phrases it gives you in Google Scholar, Google, and in [library databases](#).
9. For more specific research, you can ask ChatGPT to give you some Boolean search strings to use in library databases.

Example: *Please construct a few Boolean search strings I can use when researching this topic in library databases.*

NOTE: ChatGPT will save all of this information for you, so next time you visit, you'll see this conversation in your chat history on the left side.

10. Now that you have some search strings, keywords, and phrases, you can ask ChatGTP for advice on which library databases will work best for your topic.

Example:

Thank you! Now I'd like you to recommend 2 or 3 library databases that would be good to search for this topic.

11. Go to our list of [library databases](#) and check to see if our library has the databases it recommends.

If we don't have some of them, ask ChatGPT for more databases that would work for your topic. And [Ask Us for help](#) for more specific advice on the best databases for your topic.

12. Now you can use your search strings in those databases.
If you ever need help, [Ask us!](#)

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