

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS: SELECTING A TOPIC

(Adapted from *DeKalb County Elementary Social Science Fair Handbook*)

1. Avoid topics that are limited.

Example: *What crops are grown in our county?*

A student cannot write a report on a topic that can be explained in a few words or a sentence. Better topic: *What is the economic impact of peanut production in our county?*

2. Avoid topics that are too broad.

Example: *What happened during the Civil War?*

Topics which are too big make it impossible to find all the information that is needed to cover the topic adequately.

Better Topic: *The Role of (name of a local historical figure, place or event) in the Civil War*

3. Some topics have no available information.

Example: *Why did Henry Hudson get into trouble with the crew of his ship?*

We often do not know exactly why people did what they did in the past.

4. Avoid topics that are confusing because it cannot be determined what specific information is being explored.

Example: *What do people of Japan like?*

We know that the people of Japan may differ in their likes and dislikes.

Better topic: *A Comparison of Japanese women and American women in sports competition*

5. Avoid topics on which people throughout the world cannot agree.

Example: *What is the most powerful country in the world?*

The topic should be supported with facts. The facts are used to arrive at a conclusion.

Better topic: *Why might Japan be considered one of the strongest economic powers in the world?*

6. Research the topic from a social studies viewpoint rather than investigating it as a natural science topic.

Example: Nuclear power as a political issue rather than "how it works"