

# LIMITING A SUBJECT

If you are to write an effective short theme, you must learn to limit a subject or select a subject that is already limited for treatment. If you select broad subjects, you will undoubtedly end up with a disorganized series of generalizations with no specific point of view. If you limit your subject successfully, you will find that you can build a unified whole with a few well-structured paragraphs.

To help you limit a subject, here are some suggestions.

1) **Concentrate on one particular angle of interest**

Thus a broad subject like "Religion" was effectively narrowed-down when the writer decided to present a child's view of religion as the son of a missionary in Africa.

2) **Time**

An over ambitious subject such as "Crime" becomes a feasible topic for a short theme if limited to "Crime in the 1960's" or "Chicago During the Days of Prohibition."

3) **Process**

Instead of wandering aimlessly in vast subjects such as "Space" or the "Oceans," concentrate on less expansive subjects such as "How a Space Ship Re-enters Our Atmosphere," or "How to Dock a Cabin Cruiser in High Seas."

4) **Causes and Effects**

"Depressions" or "Crime" or "Divorce" are broad subjects that become interesting cause and relationship themes, such as "The Causes of the Great Depression," "The Effects of the Crash in 1929," "The Causes of Divorce," and "The Causes of Juvenile Crime Today".

5) **Space**

Thus, "Racial Tensions in Canada" could be limited to "Racial Tensions in My Home Town," "Racial Tensions on My Campus," or "There Are No Racial Tensions in My Neighbourhood."

6) **Comparisons and Contrasts**

This technique can be seen in examples such as, "British Education and American Education," "Hitler and Mussolini" and "The Economic Resources of the North and South in 1866."

7) **Definition**

For example, "What is Poetry?", "The Meaning of the Term Nihilism," "What is an Ivory Tower?"

8) **Breaking Subjects Down**

Break them down into kinds or types, such as "Kinds of Clouds," "Types of Poetry," "Kinds of Apples," "Types of Volcanoes," "Classes of People."

9) **Combinations**

Subjects may be limited by any combination of these methods. "Racial Tensions in Chicago Last Summer," for example, is a subject. It is the topic of "Racism" limited by time, place, and by partition (one part or aspect).