Choose a topic for your research. Once you have done this, try to sum up your research in one sentence only. If you are unable to do this your research topic may be too broad, ill-thought out, too obscure or too complicated, so you will need to modify, adapt or refine your topic until you are able to sum it up in one sentence.

Once you have thought of a topic and summarized your research, you will need to present your sentence to the rest of your group so that you can receive peer and tutor feedback. You should also be prepared to offer feedback on the sentences of your fellow students. Modify and refine your one-sentence summary, if required, after having received feedback.

There are many interesting and creative methods that you can use to stimulate thought and focus in on your research topic. Here are some suggestions:

* Observing. Using this method, you observe phenomena or behaviour that, in your opinion, needs further investigation to explain patterns, behaviour or processes. Asking questions such as ‘what’ and ‘why’ about your observations will help to stimulate your thoughts.
* Reflecting on your experiences. This method enables you to consider past and present experiences in relation to possible research topics. For example, you might have experienced phenomena or behaviour in the workplace or during a social encounter that, in your opinion, requires further investigation. Asking in-depth questions about, and reflecting on, these experiences will help to stimulate your thoughts and further develop your research topic.
* Questioning. This is a useful technique for all students starting a research project. There are different types of question that you can ask to stimulate your thoughts and help you to choose and focus in on a suitable topic. This includes questions that:
  + stimulate reflection;
  + introduce a problem;
  + lead to deep and critical thought;
  + test existing assumptions and/or knowledge.
* Visualizing. You can create a picture to help you to think about your research. Or you may decide to draw a graph, diagram or mind map that helps you to clarify your thoughts and pull together your research topic.
* Discussing. Take every opportunity to discuss your thoughts with friends and family. This helps to stimulate thought, and receiving feedback from interested, knowledgeable parties enables you to test, modify and refine your ideas.
* Reading. If you have a general idea for a topic, read around the subject. This will deepen your understanding of current research in the field, help you to decide whether there is scope to advance this research and, if so, help to stimulate ideas.
* Brainstorming. Think about an issue and write down any thoughts that come to mind, without judgement, analysis or reflection. This is a useful technique if you have a general idea of a topic for your research, but need to focus in on important issues.
* Lateral thinking. This involves approaching an issue through an indirect route that does not follow logical ways of thought. Examples of this type of thinking include choosing an idea completely at random (opening a page in a dictionary, for example) or going against the obvious (questioning something that is taken for granted, for example). This method of thinking is useful if you want to create new ideas, perhaps for a unique research project on a topic that has not been covered before.
* Logical thinking. This way of thinking follows a logical, sequential order in which you move from one related thought to another. It involves taking important ideas and working through them in a series of stages or steps. This method helps you to organize your thoughts and focus in on your research topic.