

Most students from outside the Pierre area will be limited in the time that they will have available for actual research. You will want to make the most of your time and our resources. The following will help you in preparing for the best possible use of both.

Before coming to the archives

Have a preliminary idea of what you would like to research. In some areas of study, our collections are so vast, that having a more focused idea of your topic will allow you to save time in your search for primary materials.

Examples follow for ideas on narrowing your topic

Sample 1

What is your interest?	Railroads, trains,
Develop a general idea	Passenger trains to boxcars
Narrow down to a part of a theme	Loss of the passenger railroad and developments toward industry
Possibly focus on a specific event to illustrate your topic.	Developing of the coal trains from Wyo to Minn.

Sample 2

What is your interest?	Agriculture, Ranching
Develop a general idea	Triumphs out of the Dust bowl
Narrow down to a part of the theme	Inventions or techniques resulting from the necessity of conservation
Focus on a specific event to illustrate your idea.	Use of windbreaks, strip cropping, no-till farming

Sample 3

What is your interest?	Medical
Develop a general idea	comparing health practices
Narrow down to a part of the theme	the spread of Tuberculosis, cholera, or the Flu Epidemics
Focus on a specific event or idea to illustrate your idea	Development of vaccines, sanitation practices

If you don't have your topic narrowed down, review our on-line indexes at <http://history.sd.gov/Archives/> to discover related materials. There are many more indexes and source lists to be found once you get to the archives.

At the archives:

Bring your basic notes or outlines with you. You don't want to rely only on memory.

After you get to the archives and start to read some of our manuscripts, letters, and public documents related to your subject, you will be able to narrow down your subject matter to a more focused topic.