

Google's Wonder Wheel

Often, the most challenging step in researching any controversial topic is defining the most important subcategories—or strands of study—that broad ideas can be broken down into. Type a topic like “poverty” into any popular search engine and you’ll be buried by millions and millions of websites—which makes identifying valuable information almost impossible. Even searching for books on poverty at the local library will leave you overwhelmed.

But breaking broad topics into subcategories is really hard when that topic is new to you, right? Until now, understanding the themes connected to ideas generally required a pretty complex understanding of the main ideas to begin with!

With Google's Wonder Wheel, however, breaking a controversial topic into subcategories and sifting through web-based resources is a breeze. Use the following handout to identify a collection of categories and resources that may be worth exploring about the topic that we're currently studying in class:

Topic we are studying:	
Wonder Wheel Step	Your Results
Begin by visiting Google (http://www.google.com) and searching for your broad topic—poverty, global warming, drought, crime, hatred—the same way that you always have. In the Your Results column of this handout, record the total number of web resources that Google finds related to your topic.	Total number of web resources connected to this topic:
Click the Show Options button found at the top of your Google Search Window . Then, select Wonder Wheel from the Standard View menu on the left hand side of your screen. Google will automatically generate a web that includes several subcategories connected to your broad topic. Click the link for one subcategory that you think is important to explore. Draw the Wonder Wheel web that appears in the Your Results column of this handout. Also, record the number of web resources that Google finds related to this subcategory.	Total number of web resources connected to this subcategory: Wonder Wheel web for this subcategory:
Review the subcategories included in the new Wonder Wheel web generated by Google. Are there any that you think would logically fit into your research project? If so, list them in the Your Results column of this handout.	New subcategories that may be connected to my research project:

Each time that you click on a new link in Google's **Wonder Wheel**, a collection of new search results sorted by subcategory will appear on the right-hand side of your screen. This narrows your research and quickly points you to resources that are likely to be more valuable.

Spend some time exploring the subcategories and web resources that you believe are directly connected to your research project. In the **Your Results** column of this handout, record the number of search results Google returns for each subcategory as well as the names and web addresses of research sites in each subcategory that you want to explore further.

Consider using Snip URL (<http://www.snipurl.com>) to shorten any long addresses before adding them to this handout.

Name of subcategory 1: _____
Search results returned: _____
Websites to explore:

Name of subcategory 2: _____
Search results returned: _____
Websites to explore:

Name of subcategory 3: _____
Search results returned: _____
Websites to explore:

Now that you've used Google's **Wonder Wheel** to sort through search results connected to the topic that we are studying in class, reflect on **Wonder Wheel's** strengths and weaknesses in the **Your Results** column of this handout.

How did **Wonder Wheel** help you as a researcher? Do you think it saved you time? Why? Did it have any impact on the direction that you will take when writing about our controversial topic?

Were there any weaknesses of **Wonder Wheel** as a research tool? Are there any negative consequences for student researchers when Google does the sorting for them?

Your general thoughts about Wonder Wheel as a research tool:

Strengths of Wonder Wheel as a research tool:

Weaknesses of Wonder Wheel as a research tool: