

Sooner or later it happens. The professor announces, "There will be no final exam." You smile. He adds, "Instead, prepare a 16-page paper—on a topic of your choosing." Your smile dissolves.

You sit, denied the modest rigors of an exam, asked instead to confront two of man's most intimidating achievements: language and libraries. On a topic of your choosing.

Choosing. Ever watch people in Baskin-Robbins 31 Flavors? First pacing in front of the cases, next urging their friends to choose ahead of them, finally in almost a panic blurting out a choice: "Jamoca Almond Fudge with—uh—Blueberry Cheese-cake—no—Pistachio in a cone—dish—cone."

Most people choose term paper topics the same way, in a panic with much changing of mind. The best way to choose flavors in Baskin-Robbins is to walk in confidently, rule out *firmly* the flavors you don't want, and then demand taste samples of the ones you think you do want. Taste before you choose. The same principle applies to term papers: rule out the areas you definitely don't want to write about and then read around in the areas you are interested in before choosing. Take time to find a topic you will like.

Limiting. When you feel you're getting close to a topic, think narrow—really narrow. Sixteen pages may sound like a lot but it's less than most *Sports*



How To Write a Paper in 1,000 Easy Words