

# Research question

**A good IA relies more than anything else on a good starting point: a well-defined, narrow question with some element of a debate.**

## Ideas for finding a topic and formulating a question

Your IA can be about any topic in history, provided it's longer than 10 years ago. However, you could also consider choosing something that falls within the realm of your IB course. Start with your course overview and pick an area of interest from there. This will allow you to gain extra depth and detail in a part of your syllabus which may come in handy on your exam. On the other hand, if you are truly passionate about a topic which is not on your syllabus, by all means, follow your interests.

## The question...

- Should allow for a point to be made, or a debate to be settled. It should **not** lead to a simple narrative.
- Must be specific – narrow it down as much as you can.
- Should have focus – date, time frame, geography, event (turning points are good)
- To what extent . . . or How far . . . style questions are usually good.
- Must be able to be answered within 2200 words
- Must be focused on an event with a cutoff date of 10 years before the submission date.
- Is there a sufficient range of resources for the study of the topic?

Do not explore the obvious. A title like, "*Was Lenin an important figure in the Russian Revolution?*" is redundant because everyone knows, without exploring or investigating anything, that he was. Remember, this is an investigation. Your title should enable you to explore and investigate different views of the historical period you choose. "*To what extent was Lenin's political ambition more important in bringing about the Russian Revolution than the failures of Nicholas II's reign?*" could be a more appropriate title.

## The range

The IB History guide lists a few possible topic ideas for the IA;

- a historical topic or theme using written sources or a variety of sources (**the most common IA**)
- a historical problem using documents (this could include newspapers)
- a local history study
- a historical study based on oral interviews
- a historical investigation based on interpreting a novel, film or work of art
- a historical topic based on fieldwork, for example, a museum, archeological site, battlefields, historic buildings