

Your History of Sport EPQ Journey Starts Here...

Your First Steps

The study of sport in a historical context can offer a wonderfully rich and exciting area of research for your personal project!



You could go in all sorts of interesting and creative directions as a result, so where's best to start?

Step One

The first step is to decide on your area of focus. There are many that you could consider choosing from, for example:

- The history of an individual sport
- A comparative history of sports
- Women's sport and its relationship to change
- The development of disability sport
- A thematic study of change as reflected in sport
- The importance and role of sport in your local area
- The significance of an individual or club in the development of a sport
- The relationship between sport and politics over time
- Ethical issues in sporting history
- The history and significance of a particular event or games
- Turning points in sport

Step Two

Having decided on your area of focus, the second step is begin to refine what your research question might look like in relation to it. This is a *process*!

For example, if you decided to focus on the history of Women's sport, you might begin with a question like:

How far does the development of women's sport in Britain between 1875 and the present day reflect wider changes in society?

That would be absolutely brilliant. But if you have an interest in a particular sport, it could be further refined to, for example:

How far does the development of women's cricket in Britain from 1950 to the present day reflect wider changes in attitudes towards women's sport?

But as you see, this question would still also bring in an element of comparison. That would be fantastic, too.

Maybe, as you then think more about the structure of your question, the role of an individual might emerge as being especially significant. In this case, as an example:

The Cricket writer and historian Scyled Berry described Rachael Heyhoe Flint as 'the Dr W G Grace of women's cricket – the pioneer without whom the game would not be what it is.' How important was her role in the development of women's cricket since the Second World War?

It really is a *process*. And an exciting one! Here's another example.

You might be broadly interested in the historical relationship between politics and sport. You therefore could consider starting with a broad question like:

George Orwell wrote that 'serious sport is war minus the shooting'. How far does a study of sport in the twentieth century support this idea?

Almost certainly this would involve identifying some specific examples to illustrate, develop and test your argument.

And this could in turn lead to a process of further refinement. For example:

George Orwell wrote that 'serious sport is war minus the shooting'. What do the Olympic Games tell us about international relations during in the Cold War period between 1948 and 1992?

Or you could focus even more closely on a specific event or Games. For instance:

How effectively did Hitler to use the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games to express and develop Nazi ideology?

Or alternatively:

What was the wider significance of the Mexico Podium Salute at the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games in relation to the Civil Rights Movement in America at this time?

As you think further and reflect, another, a different - maybe even local - angle could emerge. For example:

What role did Wenlock Olympian Games of the mid-nineteenth century play in the development of the modern Olympic Games?

Step Three

Having decided on your focus area and then refined your question, a third step is to begin to explore both the **historiography** of your chosen area and the **sources** that you will need to identify, evaluate and use to build your own arguments.

The following links will provide you with some interesting starting points:

- <https://martinjohnes.com/2020/04/15/why-sport-is-an-important-topic-for-historical-study/>
- <https://admcgregor3.wordpress.com/2012/10/09/a-brief-history-of-sports-history/>
- <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/617447/15/20160608%20Historical%20Frameworks%20main%20article%20V1%20FINAL.pdf>
- <https://www.history.ac.uk/library/collections/sport-history>

Any of the following books also offer great, overview insights into some of the main themes associated with the study of this subject:

- Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)
- Derek Birley, *Sport and the Making of Modern Britain* (Manchester, 1993)
- Neil Wigglesworth, *The Evolution of English Sport* (London: Frank Cass, 1996)
- Tony Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

The Next Steps

Excited about starting your project? Go to our website www.sportingheritage.org.uk or email us at education@sportingheritage.org.uk to find out more about our programme of advice and guidance in relation to your chosen area of study.

Good luck on the journey ahead!