



Developing a Focus Question or Statement for your Viva Voce

Where to begin?

The focus question, statement you decide to research for your viva voce is very important. This is also known as the title and is written in the 'title' box on the summary sheet. It needs to be specific enough to enable you to show off your listening and analysis skills, whilst broad enough to show your musicological understanding of the topic. **On the summary sheet, this is referred to as the 'title' of your viva.**

For example, a statement like "The Music of The Beatles" is far too broad to cover effectively in 10 minutes. It would be better to focus perhaps on "The development of The Beatles' music from 1960 to 1970". This allows you to cover all concepts, in the context of their music over a shorter period of time. You could compare two, three or four different songs and make references to all the concepts quite comfortably in 10 minutes.

It can also be a good idea to focus on music for a particular instrument. For example, "The use of the tenor sax in Australian Jazz". You need to remember, however, that you are there to discuss the use of that instrument in relation to the *concepts*. It's not just a chance to show off how much you know about the instrument itself. This option is a great idea if you love playing your instrument and you're confident demonstrating its capabilities and a range of performance techniques.

REMEMBER TWO THINGS:

1. The focus you choose, must relate to one of the three topics you are studying. See your teacher for more information about this.
2. In the end, the viva voce is about discovering how much you know about the Concepts of Music. You will be required to display an AURAL understanding of what you present, as well as a MUSICOLOGICAL understanding. Again, see your teacher if you are unsure about what this means.

Here are a few questions to get you started on choosing a focus area...

MY MUSICAL INTERESTS

What types of music am I interested in? Which genres, bands, artists or instruments do I connect most with?



What are the topics I am studying this year? What are the restrictions or boundaries I have in making a choice? Talk to your teacher about what they might recommend.

MY BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Do I already play an instrument that will help me understand this topic? Can my tutor help me in any way?

Have I completed research previously that I could use as a starting point for a more specific focus?



Here are some examples of focus statements. Write underneath each one, what you think of them. Are they too broad? Too specific? Do they allow for the exploration of a range of concepts? If you think they need to be changed, also write a new, updated version.

a. The guitar in Australian rock music

Comments: _____

Alternative: _____

b. How are the vocals different between Kelly Clarkson's version of "Since You've Been Gone" and Joyride's cover?

Comments: _____

Alternative: _____

c. Technology in Music. How has it evolved?

Comments: _____

Alternative: _____

INITIAL IDEAS FOR A FOCUS STATEMENT

Below, write down three ideas for a focus for your viva voce. They don't need to be perfect but should be clear in expressing what you want to cover. Once you have done this, discuss again with your teacher and take note of their feedback.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Teacher Feedback: _____

After talking further with your teacher or tutor, make a decision and record the title of your viva voce below.

FINAL FOCUS STATEMENT/QUESTION



NOTE: It is almost certain, at some stage, that you will want to change your area of focus. There is nothing wrong with doing this but it is a big decision and should not be made without your teacher's knowledge and advice. **PLEASE TALK TO YOUR TEACHER IF YOU PLAN ON CHANGING THE FOCUS OF YOUR VIVA!**