

FROM TOPIC TO RESEARCH QUESTION

After choosing a topic and gathering background information, add focus with a research question.

Explore Questions

- Ask open-ended “how” and “why” questions about your general topic.
 - Consider the “so what” of your topic. Why does this topic matter to you? Why should it matter to others?
- Reflect on the questions you have considered. Identify one or two questions you find engaging and which could be explored further through research.

Determine and Evaluate Your Research Question

What aspect of the more general topic you will explore?

Is your research question clear?

Is your research question focused?

Is your research question complex?

**Note* - Research questions must be specific enough to be well covered in the space available. Questions shouldn't have a simple yes/no answer and should require research and analysis.*

Hypothesize

- After you've come up with a question, consider the path your answer might take.
 - If you are making an argument, what will you say?
 - Why does your argument matter?
 - How might others challenge your argument?
- What kind of sources will you need to support your argument?

Sample Research Questions

Clarity

Unclear: Why are social networking sites harmful?

Clear: How are online users experiencing or addressing privacy issues on social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook?

Simple vs. Complex

Too simple: How are doctors addressing diabetes in the U.S.?

Appropriately complex: What are common traits of those suffering from diabetes in America, and how can these commonalities be used to aid the medical community in prevention of the disease?

Focused

Unfocused: What is the effect on the environment from global warming?

Focused: How is glacial melting affecting penguins in Antarctica?