

Developing a Research Question

The first step in any research process is developing a research question that you can feasibly research in the time and space allotted for your research project. Use the questions below to formulate a strong Research Question.

Part I: What Should I Research?

- A. Possible Research Question:
- B. Why I am interested in this Research Question?
- C. Why this question is worth researching?
- D. Three questions that I have about my Research Question:

Part II: Is This Something I Am Able To Research?

Ask the following questions to evaluate the feasibility of your research question.

- A. Does the question deal with a topic or issue that interests me enough to spark my own thoughts and opinions?
- B. Is the question easily and fully researchable?
- C. What type of information do I need to answer the research question?
E.g., The research question, "What impact has deregulation had on commercial airline safety?" will obviously require certain types of information:
 - statistics on airline crashes before and after
 - statistics on other safety problems before and after
 - information about maintenance practices before and after
 - information about government safety requirements before and after
- D. Is the scope of this information reasonable?
- E. Given the type and scope of the information that I need, is my question too broad, too narrow, or okay?
- F. What sources will have the type of information that I need to answer the research question (journals, books, Internet resources, government documents, people)?
- G. Can I access these sources?
- H. Given my answers to the above questions, do I have a good quality research question that I actually will be able to answer by doing research?

Adapted from *What Is Writing?: An Introduction to Writing as an Act and Medium of Communication* (2015).



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Organizing Research

Complete the following cover sheet for each source that you plan to use in your research project.

PLEASE NOTE: Before completing this cover sheet for one of your sources, please make sure that you have determined that:

- a. the source is reliable;
- b. the source relates to your topic;
- c. the source will contribute to your understanding and discussion of the topic.

Research Source Cover Sheet

A. Bibliographic Information

1. Author:
2. Title of Source:
3. Title of Container:
4. Publisher:
5. Date:
6. Location:

B. Content

1. Can you locate one or two sentences that concisely state the organizing principle and/or argument of the article or essay?
2. What are the key points that the author makes to support his/her thesis or argument?
3. In your own words and in two to three sentences, summarize the content of the article or essay.
4. Record any quotes, points, or passages that you believe may be relevant to your research project. **MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE THE PAGE NUMBER WHERE THESE APPEAR!!!!**
5. Are there any references to other sources (books, articles, studies, etc.) in the article or in the article bibliography that you believe might be useful for your project? If so, make a note of that here (include author, title, and if available, publisher info).
6. Write one paragraph in which you discuss they key points made in this source.

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