



Developing Successful Research Questions

Firstly, all basic research questions should be:

- ★ **Clear:** They should provide enough detail that a reader can understand the main idea and purpose without needing extra explanation.
- ★ **Complex:** You should not be able to answer the question with “yes” or “no.” The question should require analysis and research before coming to a final conclusion or answer. It should require a specific answer; questions that are too broad are difficult to answer and likely have already been studied in the past.

When developing a research question, it is important to keep in mind the four most important aspects of a successful research question that will help guide you in the right direction:

1. **FOCUS** Ask yourself: What specific topic do you want to study?
 - Choose a narrow subject to study; picking something too broad will make it difficult to fully research and answer. In addition, choose a topic that has not yet been studied or has a new element. Make sure you are specific with all parts of your research question- do not leave any confusion for the audience.
 - For example, asking “What effect does social media have on people’s minds?” is too broad, and it would take a long time to cover all aspects of the question. Instead, you could ask, “What effect does daily use of Twitter have on the attention span of under-16s?”
2. **SCOPE** Ask yourself: How big is your study?
 - Make sure you have parameters in your question. Having a limit on your research allows for more well-rounded research. Using parameters can also help make your research unique. Examples of possible limits you could include are as follows:
 - Time period
 - Demographics (age, race, gender, etc.)
 - Participants
 - Geography
3. **FEASIBILITY** Ask yourself: Can your RQ actually be studied?
 - Make sure that you will actually be able to perform your research; if you pick a topic that is not convenient for you to study or could be too difficult to perform as a high school student, you might want to pick something else.
 - Create a small game plan to conduct your research. This will help you see if it is something that can actually be done. In this plan, include who/what you will need, how you will collect data, and how much time you will need to complete your research.
 - For example, asking “Does Canada or the UK have a better healthcare system?” is not a feasible question because it will be difficult to perform research about something occurring in different countries. It is also not specific enough; this reflects a focus that is too broad.
4. **VALUE** Ask yourself: What will be added to the body of knowledge or information that already exists?
 - You want to make sure that your research is actually meaningful and important to a field of study. Picking something just because it’s easy might lead you to getting bored of your topic or not putting in enough effort to complete your research. How will your topic add to the body of knowledge about your subject?
 - The “importance” or “significance” of your research can have multiple different meanings. For example:
 - It could change the way someone thinks about your topic
 - It could bring new information to an unstudied topic
 - It could further an already-existing belief

- It could add beauty to the world