Developing a Research Question

1. Introduction

1.1 Start

Developing a Research or Guiding Question!

1.2 Welcome

Welcome to Developing a Research or Guiding Question!

Click on the “NEXT” button to continue.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between a search topic and a research question by defining both
- Use the characteristics of good research questions to successfully create one
- Articulate the purpose of and the ways you can construct a strong research question, and
- Apply guidelines for developing a research question using who, what, where, when, why and how questions.
2. Define a Search Topic and Research Question

2.1 Research Question

Before beginning research for an assignment, it’s important to develop a research question.

Research questions serve as a guide for the kind of information you need to compile on your topic.

2.2 Topic vs. Research Question

A topic is the broad subject area that you will research.

A research or guiding question is a specific aspect of your topic that you want to learn more about.

Think of your topic as a question and your research as the answer.

What do you want to know about your topic that can be answered by compiling research? This is your research question.
3. Characteristics of a Successful Research Question

3.1 Characteristics

There are important points to keep in mind when turning your topic into a research question.

A successful research or guiding question has specific characteristics:

- It should be of interest to you and driven by your curiosity to learn something about the topic. You’ll find it’s much easier to write persuasively about a topic that interests you.

- Your question needs to focus your search for sources of information that can be gathered and analyzed, leading you to new knowledge or insights.

- The question and your conclusions should be significant and relatable to your readers.

4. Purpose of a Strong Research Question

4.1 Purpose

Give your research or guiding question interest by making sure it answers or resolves an important issue for you and for others as well.
You also want a question that leads you to a conclusion or recommendation that you can justify after you have gathered and weighed the evidence.

For example, a question such as “What are reality television programs?” will not be of much interest to most readers. All this question will lead to is a definition. Most people know what reality television programs are and probably wouldn’t take the time to read your report.

5. Construct a Strong Research Question

5.1 Aspects of Question

A good research or guiding question is a mechanism for focusing and narrowing your research and should generate interest by addressing an important issue. What you present and conclude should make your readers think about reality television in a new way.

For example, a better question using the “How” prompt might be, “How does regular viewing of reality television programs influence viewers’ perceptions of human behavior over time?”

This is a very complex question with many different aspects or potential directions, but the question gives you a clear direction for your research and will lead to some interesting discussion, analysis, and conclusions.

Keep in mind you do not need to use only who, what, when, where, why, and how questions for your research question, but they are good prompts
to get you thinking.

5.2 Question Characteristics Activity

(Drag and Drop, 10 points, 3 attempts permitted)

Take a moment now to identify the characteristics of a good research or guiding question. A variety of characteristics are listed here.

Drag those that best describe a successful research or guiding question to the question mark on the screen.

When you’re ready, click “Submit” at the bottom to check your answers.

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5.3 Disciplinary lens

As university students, you can refine a research question by looking at the question through the lens of a common academic discipline or disciplines.

For example, if you are interested in how reality television:
... may change or influence people individually or within relationships, you will be looking at your topic through a psychological lens.

OR

... developed as a television staple, you may be using a media, history, or communications lens.

OR

... might be changing stereotypes about certain groups of people, you will be using a sociology lens.

Use the lens in your field of study to assist in defining your research question. Keep in mind that some questions can be viewed through many lenses.

5.4 Research Questions

In the following slides, we’ll examine possible research questions.

For each pair of research questions, select the better option for research and provoking interest.

5.5 Research Question 1

(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)
Test Your Skills

From the research questions listed below, which is the better option for research and provoking interest?

In the aftermath of another recent Major League Baseball doping scandal, what should Major League Baseball do to ensure players do not dope in the future?

In the aftermath of another recent Major League Baseball doping scandal, what penalties do the players involved face?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
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|        | In the aftermath of another recent Major League Baseball doping scandal, what penalties do the players involved face? |

5.6 Research Question 2

(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)
Test Your Skills

From the research questions listed below, which is the better option for research and provoking interest?

- [ ] How can social media be used most effectively to encourage the engagement and involvement of young people in social issues?
- [ ] Is social media a factor in how young people view social issues?

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<tr>
<td>X</td>
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5.7 Research Question 3

(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)
Who are the biggest celebrity social activists, and what are their causes?

Do celebrities misuse their influence as public figures by championing their favored social causes, and what effect does it have on the public?

5.8 Research Question 4

(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)
Correct Choice

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<th>Why should society imprison drug users for long periods of time?</th>
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<tr>
<td>What meaningful steps can society take to educate people and alleviate drug addiction problems?</td>
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5.9 **Research Question 5**

*Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted*
Test Your Skills

From the research questions listed below, which is the better option for research and provoking interest?

- Do elephants experience emotions like grief and friendship?
- How should we treat elephants when we know they experience many of the same emotions we do as humans?

<table>
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<th>Correct Choice</th>
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5.10 WWWWWH

One way to start generating questions you can answer with research is to use the journalistic practice of asking who, what, where, when, why, and how questions.

For example, let’s say your topic is reality television. Click on each question prompt on the screen to see how that prompt could be applied to this topic.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Learning Outcomes

This module briefly introduced you to creating good research or guiding questions.

Now that you have completed this module, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between a search topic and a research question by
defining both

- Use the characteristics of good research questions to successfully create one.
- Articulate the purpose of and the ways you can construct a strong research question.
- Develop a research question using who, what, where, when, why and how questions.

For additional assistance consult your professor or a librarian, they are happy to help!

### 6.2 Conclusion

Congratulations!

You have completed *Developing a Research or Guiding Question*!

To take a brief quiz, click the NEXT button.