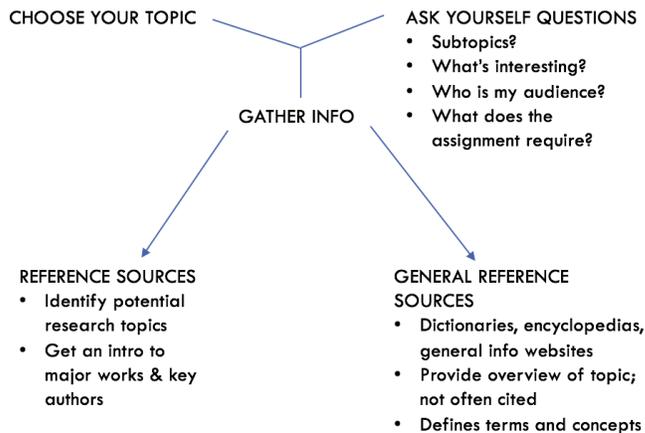


Finding and Researching a Topic

- Start broad and slowly narrow
- Different sources have different values & uses
 - Wikipedia, academic blogs, & online summaries: Good for introductory knowledge; not so much as a citation
 - Textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias: Good, reliable (though sometimes dated) information especially if you're looking at established theories or concepts
 - Scholarly journals and articles: Good for citations and support; might be too specific and detailed for a brainstorming session

Narrowing Your Topic



From Topic to Research Questions

- The specificity of a well-developed research question helps writers avoid the “all-about” paper and work toward supporting a specific, arguable thesis.
- Go from BROAD TO NARROW
 - a topic is too broad if you can state it in 3 to 6 words
 - the history of commercial aviation.
 - There is a history of commercial aviation. (weak claim)
 - the role of race in elections
 - Race plays a role in elections. (weak claim)

Narrowing and Focusing Your Research Question

- Narrow your topics by adding verbs that express *actions or relationships*
 - The history of commercial aviation → The contribution of the military in developing DC-3 in the early years of commercial aviation.
 - Working Claim/Argument: In the early years of commercial aviation, the military contributed to the way DC-3 developed.
 - It's a claim that is still thin but much stronger and gives a specific argument.
 - Race and elections → the influence of race on voter turnout in the last 4 presidential elections.
 - Working Claim/Argument: Voter turnout in the last 4 presidential elections has been influenced by racial demographics.

Asking Questions

Ask Open-ended “how” and “why” questions about your general topic. These questions will allow you to find different kinds of evidence or information about your topic that might be helpful to your writing.

ASK ABOUT:

- the history of your topic
- the structure and composition of your topic
- how your topic is categorized
- ask “what if?” and other speculative questions
- ask questions that build on agreement with your sources
- ask questions that reflect disagreement with your sources

Using Templates to Start Asking Questions

1. **Name Your Topic**

“I am trying to learn about (work on, studying) _____”

2. **Add an indirect question**

“because I want to find out who/what/when/where/ whether/why/how _____”

3. **Answer “So What?” by motivating your question**

“in order for my reader to understand how, why, or whether _____”

Evaluate Your Questions

- **Is your research question clear?** With so much research available on any given topic, research questions must be as clear as possible in order to be effective in helping the writer direct his or her research.
- **Is your research question focused?** Research questions must be specific enough to be well covered in the space available.
- **Is your research question complex?** Research questions should not be answerable with a simple “yes” or “no” or by easily-found facts. They should, instead, require both research and analysis on the part of the writer.

Types of Research Problems

- **PRACTICAL RESEARCH PROBLEM:** a problem caused by some condition in the world that makes us unhappy because it costs time, respect, security, pain, etc.
 - We solve it by **DOING** something (or by encouraging others to do something) that eliminates the cause of the problem or ameliorates its costs
- **CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH PROBLEM:** a problem that arises simply because we do not understand something about the world as well as we would like.
 - This problem is solved by answering a question that helps us understand it better.

Hypothesize and Form a Working Thesis Statement

Categorize your research questions as primary or secondary questions:

- **PRIMARY: *Open-ended questions*;** typically begins with “how” or “why.” These are what the entirety of the paper will address.
 - How can Americans reduce their risk of getting Type 2 Diabetes?
- **SECONDARY:** Questions that can be answered by *facts*. These will be answered along the way in support of the primary question.
 - What are the two types of diabetes? What are the differences between Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes? How common are they in different age groups?