

Formulating a well-focused research question

Developing a narrow, focused research question is an integral part of your extended essay process. A research question will provide a path to guide you through your research and writing.

<p>Step 1. Choose your subject area</p>	<p>Which subject area is of most personal interest to you? Is there something you are especially curious about in one of your IB courses?</p>
<p>Step 2. Choose a topic that interests you</p>	<p>Describe your work in one sentence.</p> <p>I want to learn about _____.</p> <p>Example: I want to learn about public funding for the arts.</p>
<p>Step 3. Suggest a question</p>	<p>Try to describe your research by developing a question that specifies something about your topic.</p> <p>I am studying _____ because I want to find out (who, what, when, where, whether, why or how) _____.</p> <p>Example: I am studying public funding for the arts because I want to find out how accessible the arts are to those people who are on low incomes.</p> <p>Direct question: To what extent are the arts accessible to people who belong to the class of the working poor?</p> <p>Include a command term from your subject area to help form the research question.</p> <p>Will you be able to argue a specific position? What are some possible issues or arguments?</p>
<p>Step 4. Evaluate your question</p>	<p>Answer the questions:</p> <p>Is there a range of perspectives on this topic?</p> <p>Does the research question allow for analysis, evaluation and the development of a reasoned argument?</p> <p>I am studying _____ because I want to find out _____ in order to understand (how, why or whether) _____.</p> <p>Example: I am studying public funding for the arts because I want to find out how accessible the arts are to the working poor so I can determine whether tax dollars support cultural enrichment for all citizens regardless of their socio-economic status.</p>
<p>Step 5. Restate your question using a different command term</p>	<p>Asking the question in a different way might help you view your topic in a different way.</p> <p>How does analyzing ...</p> <p>To what extent ...</p>
<p>Step 6. Review with your supervisor</p>	<p>Is your supervisor able to understand the nature of your research?</p> <p>Is it clear to your supervisor how and why your topic is relevant in your subject area?</p>

Step 7. Reflection

If you can adequately respond to the “so what?” question, you may be on your way to a clear and focused research question using your initial topic idea.