

Developing a Research Question

Transcript

Introduction

Welcome! In this short video, we'll look at how to take a refined topic and turn it into a strong research question.

Forming a research question usually comes right after you have developed your topic. At this stage, the goal is to decide what kind of questions you want answers for. Think about what you are interested in really learning about your topic, and the type of arguments you are thinking to build. This matters because the purpose of your question will shape how you frame and focus it.

Welcome! In this video, we will look at how to develop a strong research question from your topic.

At this stage, the goal is to decide what you want to find out. Use your topic and think about what you really want to understand and learn. Also, consider the type of arguments you are interested in building. This matters because the purpose of your research question will shape how you frame and focus it.

Research Directions

To help with this, use one of these four common research directions.

You might **explore** a topic by investigating an issue that hasn't been studied in depth. This approach focuses on identifying key patterns or themes.

You could **explain** by examining relationships between variables to understand underlying causes or mechanisms.

You might **compare** by looking at differences or similarities across groups, contexts, or conditions.

Lastly, you could **evaluate** by assessing the effectiveness, impact, or extent of a particular practice, phenomenon, or outcome.

Example – Research Direction

Now let's see how these directions work with an example. We'll use the topic *“the impact of social media on Canadian university students' mental health.”*

To **explore**, you could look at how students describe the connection between their social media habits and their emotional well-being. The goal is to understand their experiences in detail.

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To **explain**, you could examine why certain patterns of social media use are linked to different levels of stress or anxiety.

To **compare**, you could look at differences in mental health impacts between frequent and infrequent users.

To **evaluate**, you could see how much using social media affects students' overall mental health.

Key elements of a RQ

Once you have chosen your direction, the next step is to shape it into a strong research question. A good question is clear, which means it avoids jargon and can easily be understood.

It should also be focused. This means the question should not be so broad that you cannot manage it within the scope of your assignment.

Your question also needs to be researchable, which means there is enough data, evidence, or sources available for you to actually investigate it.

Another key quality is your question should be open-ended. In other words, the answer shouldn't just be a simple "yes" or "no," but instead invites deeper exploration and analysis.

Finally, aim for your question to be significant. It could address an issue or idea that is meaningful to a field of research or relevant to a community that you care about.

When your question checks all five areas, that ensures you are starting your research with a strong foundation.

Example – Forming the RQ

Now, we know exactly what to consider when making a research question. Let's build on our example from earlier. Out of the options I thought of, I chose to go with the evaluate direction. It's a good starting point, but it's still too general and not a full research question yet.

To strengthen it, I narrowed the focus and made it more specific while ensuring it is clear, researchable, open-ended, and significant. The research question I came up with is "What is the relationship between daily TikTok use and anxiety levels among first year Canadian university students?" I kept the core idea, social media and emotional well-being, but made it more specific and focused.

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I also rephrased it into a full, open-ended question. That way, the question invites deeper exploration instead of a simple answer, and it identifies the scope of the research better.

Conclusion

My research question is complete. Now you know how to form a clear, focused question that guides your research. No matter which direction you take, think about what you really want to find out, and let that shape how you frame your question. In this video, we went through an example

Let's showcase how these directions work with an example. For this example, we will use the topic "the impact of social media on Canadian university students' mental health."

If you are exploring, you are trying to understand what is going on, possibly by looking at how people describe their own experiences with social media and emotional well-being.

If you are explaining, then you are digging into the reasons why certain patterns of use might lead to more stress or anxiety.

If you are comparing, you are looking at differences, such as between students that use social media a lot versus those that don't.

And if you are evaluating, you are judging the overall impact of the issue, such as how strongly social media can influence student mental health.