Writing Research Questions

When doing research, it is very important to write very clear research questions. Here we will step through the process of writing and selecting questions for your project.

What is your research topic? _________________________________

Basic short-answer questions: Who, what, when, and where questions can typically be answered with short answers and are usually not considered research questions. They are very important to our research, but more for background information for our larger questions. For example:

- Who discovered manmade climate change?
- What is climate change?
- When was climate change first observed?
- Where are the effects of climate seen?
- Who will be most severely impacted by climate change?
- What are some solutions to climate change?

Activity: For your chosen research topic, write two of each of these types of questions.

**Who questions:**

1.

2.

**What questions:**

1.

2.

**When questions:**

1.

2.

**Where questions:**

1.

2.
Research questions deal with **big ideas, changes over time, different points of view, ethical issues, etc.** They typically deal with how and why, and combinations of these. For example:

- Why do Americans ignore the scientific evidence that shows climate change is real?
- Why do world leaders disagree on a solution to climate change?
- How can the average person help to reverse climate change?
- How can scientists get Americans to take the threat of climate change seriously?
- How/why …?

Some what and where questions deal with big ideas; for example:

- Where will the impact of climate change appear first, and what plans can be developed to reduce the damage?
- What can Americans do to reduce levels of greenhouse gases and where should we begin?

For your chosen topic, write three of each of these types of questions:

**Why questions:**

1.  
2.  
3.  

**How questions:**

1.  
2.  
3.  

**Formulating the Research Question:**

Read through each question, and sort them by like topics. You should have 3-4 clusters of questions. From the questions in each cluster, combining them into one big picture, open-ended research question; one from each cluster. From these 3-4 questions (from the 3-4 clusters of questions) select one to serve as your research question.

From the questions you wrote, select

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

as your research questions.