

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question is the question(s) that your project aims to answer. Often singular, sometimes plural it addresses the issue, which, through analysis and interpretation of data, you want to answer in your conclusion.

The research question is at the core of your article; it clarifies the purpose of your research. Making sure you have established a well-developed research question will help you to stay focused. Moreover, with a clear research question presented in the introduction, the reader will understand immediately what your work is about and can follow your thinking.

You will probably have already presented your research question when laying out the foundation for your project. **Go back to that proposal and identify the parts that you will be addressing in your manuscript.** This will remind you of the focus of your work and help you reflect on how this manuscript fits into the larger project.

Once you have clarified your goals, follow these key steps to define the research question:

- Choose a broad topic that your research interests fit into.
- Spend some time doing preliminary reading to find the key discussions that have already been covered - without getting lost in answering your questions already.
- Keep your audience in mind – where will you publish this?
- Select a specific point of view or period in time that you want to work on.
- Think about any requirements you need to follow.
- Write the question

Once you have defined your question, write it down checking it against the following criteria for accuracy:

Ask yourself: Is your question...?

- **Clear:** it clearly states what the writers is researching and provides enough details for the audience.
- **Focused:** It is specific enough that it can be answered in the scope of the publication. But also, broad enough to be developed without lacking arguments.
- **Not too easy:** It requires a complex analysis of ideas and sources and not only a yes or no answer.
- **Researchable:** You should be able to access a suitable amount of primary and/or secondary sources.
- **Relevant:** It is relevant to your field of study and society more broadly.
- **Analytical:** It should allow you to produce an analysis of a problem rather than a simple description.

Examples

- **Too easy:** Has there been an increase in homelessness in the US in the past 20 years?
- **Appropriately complex:** How have economic and political factors affected patterns of homelessness in the US over the past 20 years?
- **Unclear:** Why are social media harmful?
- **Clear:** How are online users experiencing or addressing privacy issues on social media like Facebook?
- **Unfocused:** What is the effect on the environment from global warming?
- **Focused:** How is glacial melting affecting penguins in Antarctica?
- **Too easy:** How are doctors addressing obesity in the UK?

Bas Straub

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I am Bas Straub, and it is my personal desire to help you to get accepted for publication. I know how challenging **the road to publishing** can be. This is why I have created Authoring Academy; to help you to get accepted for publication.

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To get published;

- you must get your **language** right,
- you must get your **manuscript** right,
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- **Appropriately complex:** What are common traits of those suffering from obesity in the UK, and how can these commonalities be used to aid the medical community in prevention of the disease?

In a research article you will usually have one question. Longer publications might have multiple research questions connecting on a central problem.

Writing tips

- Keep your research question written on a piece of paper next to you. It will help you find your way back to the core of your work should you lose track.
- When reviewing the article before submission, come back to the research question: is the overall purpose of the work clear? Do the findings answer the overall question?

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As a researcher you need to **get your research published**. Using Authoring Academy, you will learn how to improve your chances to get accepted for publication. You will know that to get published, you'll need more than excellent research.

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- you must get your **language** right,
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