Get Creative: Refine your Research Topic

Make your topic more interesting and researchable by using Personal Interest Questions and/or Contextual Interest Questions to refine your topic. Then, TQR It! to guide your research and writing.

**TOPIC:** ________________________________

**Refine your topic using Personal Interest Questions**

What do I find interesting about this topic?

What would I like to learn about my topic?

Who else might find this interesting?

What new perspective would I bring to it?

What do I NOT want to talk about (clichéd perspectives)?
Refine your topic using Contextual Interest Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context/Focus</th>
<th>Applied to your Topic:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Are you focusing on a specific period of time? Do you need to provide a historical overview of your topic?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Place</strong></td>
<td>Does your topic connect your research to a particular region? If so, do you need to consider or address local social norms &amp; values, economic &amp; political systems, or languages?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>Does your topic focus on a particular population or demographic? Examples: age, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, species...</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Viewpoint</strong></td>
<td>Do you plan to approach your topic through a particular lens? Examples: legal, medical, ethical, biological, psychological, economic, political, educational...</td>
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**TQR it! – Developing a research question**

**Topic:** I am studying _______________...

**Question:** ...because I want to find out who/how/why ________________,

*Identifies what you do not know or understand about your topic.*

**Rationale:** ...in order to understand how/why/what ________________.

*Answers the "So what?" question, indicating why you and (more importantly) your audience will be interested in your research problem.*

**Example Topic: Whistleblowers**

**Topic:** I am studying differences in the media treatment of “whistleblowers” in America...

**Question:** ...because I want to find out how the American public’s definition of “heroes” and “traitors” has changed over time,

**Rationale:** ...in order to show how public perception of “whistleblowers” has changed post 9/11.

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