Your Research Plan

Step One: What topic are you researching? *(e.g. abortion)*

Step Two: What are the broad subjects within which your topic lies? *(e.g. law, ethics, religion, medicine, social sciences, etc...)*

Step Three: Use reference sources to create a “working knowledge” of your topic by being able to answer the five Ws. *(Who - are the important figures/organizations/groups associated with your topic? What - key events define your topic? When - Does your topic cover a specific time period? Where - Is your topic focused on a primary geographic location? Why - is it important to know something about this topic?)*

Who

What

When

Where
Step Four. Express your research idea in the form of a question. (*What aspect of your topic would you like to find more about? Refer to *Planning: Thought Starters* below for help in devising a research question/thesis statement.*)

**Planning: Thought Starters from Purdue University's Online Writing Lab**

Here are twenty questions or “thought starters” that present ways of observing or thinking about your topic. Each question generates the type of essay listed in parentheses after the question.

1. What does X mean? (Definition)
2. What are the various features of X? (Description)
3. What are the component parts of X? (Simple Analysis)
4. How is X made or done? (Process Analysis)
5. How should X be made or done? (Directional Analysis)
6. What is the essential function of X? (Functional Analysis)
7. What are the causes of X? (Causal Analysis)
8. What are the consequences of X? (Causal Analysis)
9. What are the types of X? (Classification)
10. How is X like or unlike Y? (Comparison)
11. What is the present status of X? (Comparison)
12. What is the significance of X? (Interpretation)
13. What are the facts about X? (Reportage)
14. How did X happen? (Narration)
15. What kind of person is X? (Characterization/Profile)
16. What is my personal response to X? (Reflection)
17. What is my memory of X? (Reminiscence)
18. What is the value of X? (Evaluation)
19. What are the essential major points or features of X? (Summary)
20. What case can be made for or against X? (Persuasion)

(Adapted from Jacqueline Berke's *Twenty Questions for the Writer*)

This page is located at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_plan3.html

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