Developing a Guiding Question for Research:

*“Asking essential questions and good supporting questions*

*makes the effort more than a game of fact chasing”*

The results of your research should be more than just a regurgitation of facts or a summary of other people’s ideas. They should be based on new ideas, explanation, analysis, and evaluation. So how do we do that?

Essential questions have certain qualities:

* They point to the heart of a subject or topic, especially its controversies or difficult intricacies.
* They generate multiple plausible answers, perspectives, and research directions that may lead to other questions.
* They develop further and deepen interest in the subject.
* They are provocative, enticing, and engagingly framed questions.
* Answers cannot be easily found. They must be developed through analysis of information.

Examples:

* What is the class structure of Brazil?
* How does the class structure function in India?
* How is China organized politically? What kind of power does the political elite have over the rest of China?
* How many religions exist in Russia?
* What kind of political problems does Iran have?

Supporting questions:

* Provide background and guide the work of the study
* More topic and subject specific.
* Frame a specific set of questions about the topic and subject.

Examples

* Does the class structure in Brazil affect the social or religious areas of their culture?
* Why doesn’t Iran have nuclear technology?
* How many people live in China?
* Why are there so many people in India?

In order for your research paper to be more than a game of Trivial Pursuit, you must critically and creatively process the information you find. By turning your topic into an essential question and asking good supporting questions, you are ensuring that your results show evidence of original and inventive ideas based on logical conclusions and thorough research.

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| Question Criteria | Common problems with questions |
| * Must be open-ended; contended; with multiple perspectives and possible answers * Non-judgemental * Emotive force/ intellectual bite * Immediate relevance and use to students * Succinct and pointed * Data is available- can be obtained * Not so general as to undoable; not so specific * Should lead to other questions | * Merely informational retrieval; does not require creating data or constructing new understandings * Begs the questions * Leading * Too generic * Too narrow |

Bibliography:

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