

Research Paper Intro

Basic Expectations:

- Focus on a topic
- Find sources
- Find data
- Take notes
- Assemble data into a report

*THE CATCH

- If a writer asks no specific *questions* worth asking, he can offer no specific *answer* worth supporting
- Serious researchers do not report data for their own sake, but to support the answer to a question they (and they hope their readers) think is worth asking

Heightened Expectations:

- The best way to begin working on your specific topic is NOT to find all the data you can on your general topic, but to formulate questions that point you to just those data that you need to answer them

Questions to Ask:

- Start with the standard journalistic questions:
 - *Who, What, When, and Where*
 - But focus on *How* and *Why*
- Ask about the **History** of your topic
- Ask about its **Structure** and **Composition**
- Ask how your topic is **Categorized**
- Turn positive questions into **Negative** ones
- Ask **What If?** And other speculative questions
- Ask questions suggested by your **Sources**
- Ask questions that reflect **Disagreement**

Research Paper Topic Proposal

- ❖ *Use the language in each of the three steps below to guide your thinking at the beginning of your planning phase*
- ❖ *Only proceed to this point if you think you have a solid topic to pursue*
- ❖ *This step should follow initial topic brainstorming*

1. **TOPIC:** this is your most basic starting point where you broadly declare what you want to focus on

a. *What are you writing about—I am writing about the topic of ...*

2. **QUESTION:** add an indirect question that indicates what you do not know or understand about your topic; this is where you indicate *WHY* you are studying your proposed topic

a. *What you don't know about it—because I want to find out ...*

3. **SIGNIFICANCE:** answer So What? This step indicates why your proposal will not just interest you but is of value to others; this step explains why you are pursuing the information proposed in step 2

a. *Why you want your reader to know and care about it—in order to help my reader better understand ...*