Research, Write, Present | Expository Writing

Research Questions

Key Concept
What do you want to know about your topic? What made the topic interesting to you? What information do you need to explain the topic thoroughly? Before you begin any research, you should determine exactly what you need to know.

All research starts with a question, but all questions do not lead to research. Research is about finding the best answers to questions that really matter. You narrowed your topic to make sure you can write an effective expository essay. Writing a few effective research questions keeps you focused while you research the topic.

Did you know you can ask many different types of questions? The types of questions you ask depends on the kinds of answers you need. An interesting topic usually requires more than one type of information to understand. That means you will need to ask more than one type of question.

Look Ahead

Task: Write some questions to guide research on your topic.

Goal: Show that you understand how to use different types of questions effectively.

You may want to review an example of research questions before you begin.

See the example: Research Questions
Vocabulary

**Words to Remember**
This page gives basic definitions for some important terms that can help you learn about effective questions. You can get a more complete definition of each term from Fact Monster*.

**New Words**
**Convergent**: Moving toward one direction or having a limited number of answers.

**Divergent**: Moving in many directions or having many answers.

**Evaluative**: Requiring judgment to decide among various opinions or answers.

**Review Words**
**Brainstorm**: Think of many possibilities as quickly as you can.

**Cause**: A person, group, event, idea, action, or object that produces a specific result or outcome.

**Classify**: Arrange people, groups, places, events, ideas, actions, or objects so that each one is assigned to a category.

**Compare**: Study two (or more) people, groups, places, events, ideas, actions, or objects to identify shared characteristics.

**Contrast**: Type or graphics that work together to create a desired effect; also, study two (or more) people, groups, places, events, ideas, actions, or objects to identify distinctive characteristics.

**Divide**: Separate people, groups, places, events, ideas, or things so that each one is placed into a category.

**Effect**: A specific result or outcome produced by something said or done by a person, group, event, idea, or thing.

**Essay**: A short written work that makes an important point about a particular topic.

**Expository**: A type of writing that explains a topic or informs an audience.

---

*Other names and brands may be claimed as the property of others.
Exploration

Learning from the Web
What information do you need to explain your topic thoroughly? Effective research questions will guide your search for information. Explore some Web sites about various types of research questions. Learn what types of questions to ask about your topic.

While you explore the following Web sites, think about the guiding questions. You may want to take notes to help you answer the questions. If you think of any other questions about how to write effective research questions, keep those in mind too.

Guiding Questions

- What types of questions should you ask to help you find out what you want to know about your topic?
- How does the type of question you ask affect the type of information you get?
- Why do you need different types of information?

Web Sites

- What's the Question? from Fact Monster*
- Task Definition* from the Big6*
- How to Impress Your Teachers by Asking Good Questions!* from the Big6*
- Creating Research Questions* from Wheeling High School*
Information

What to Know
This page summarizes some of the information from the Web sites you explored. This information helps you learn what you need to know for this activity about writing effective research questions. You may want to take notes to help you remember the most important points. You can return to the Web sites for more exploration if you want to learn more.

Writing Effective Research Questions
Effective research questions are big enough to hold your interest and small enough to answer. Many questions focus on facts that can be memorized. These memory questions are very useful, but they may not provide enough information.

Usually, you cannot fully learn about complex topics just by asking memory questions. Other types of questions can help you delve deeper into a topic. These include convergent, divergent, and evaluative questions.

Fact Questions
Fact questions always have a correct answer and usually start with words like:

- Who...?
- What...?
- Where...?
- When...?

Some examples of memory or fact questions are:

- Who invented the calendar?
- What is copyright?
- Where is Kazakhstan?

Convergent (Why) Questions
Convergent questions require more explanation than memory or fact questions but usually have correct answers. They often start with words like:

- Why...?
- How...?
- According to...?

Some examples of convergent, or why, questions are:

- Why do we have copyright laws?
- How is a PC different from a Mac?
- According to most scientists, what is the most likely impact of greenhouse gases?
Technology Literacy

- What if...?
- How could...?
- How would...?

Some examples of divergent, or idea, questions are:

- What would your life be like if you lived in another country?
- How could greenhouse gases affect the weather where you live?
- How would research be different if copyright laws did not exist?

**Evaluative (Opinion) Questions**

Evaluative questions require judgment to decide among various opinions or answers. They often include words like:

- Do you think...?
- Why should...?
- How well...?

Some examples of evaluative, or opinion, questions are:

- Do you think downloading music and graphics from the Internet is always OK?
- Why should educational use of copyrighted materials have different rules than commercial use?
- How well did the text support the author's point of view?
Task

What to Do
Complete the following task to show what you have learned about writing effective research questions. While you work through the task, think about whether you are achieving the goal. You may want to review an example of research questions before you begin.

Task: Write some questions to guide research on your topic.

Goal: Show that you understand how to use different types of questions effectively.

See the example: Research Questions for Global Warming

1. Start a new word processing document. Always remember to type your name, the date, and a title at the top of the document.

2. Write some questions to guide research for your expository essay. Make sure you address each of the following considerations:
   - Why did you choose the topic?
   - What facts do you need to know to understand the topic?
   - What kinds of research questions will provide the facts?
   - What are some different points of view about the topic?
   - What kinds of research questions will help you understand the points of view?

3. Remember to save your document frequently while you work.

4. Check with your teacher to make sure you have written effective research questions. You may want to ask your teacher if you have too few or too many questions.

5. Check the spelling and grammar in your paragraphs.

6. Double-check your work by reading the document carefully one more time.

7. Review the checklist and revise your research questions to make sure they are complete.

8. Save your document.

9. Share your research questions.
Task Example

Student Name

Date

Research Questions for Global Warming

1. What is global warming?
2. Does global warming have an effect on the weather where I live?
3. What is the greenhouse effect?
4. What role do greenhouse gases play in keeping the Earth warm?
5. How could a slowly melting glacier affect my food supply?
6. Is there something I can do to help slow the effects of global warming?