

These questions are designed to help you track your evolving understanding of your topic as you research and write. Not all of these questions will work for all topics, but you should be able to adapt them to the assignment you are working on.

Pre-Research

1. What topic have you chosen for your research and why?
2. What do you know now about the topic?
3. What do you want to find out?
4. Are you aware of any controversies regarding this topic?
If so, what are they, and what is your current stand on the issue?

During Research

5. Have you noticed any areas of disagreement among your sources?
6. Which of the viewpoints seems the most valid to you? Why?
7. Do you have any unanswered questions at this point?
8. Did anything surprise you as you gathered information?
9. What has been the most interesting aspect of the material you've gathered so far?
10. After reviewing your data or sources, what do you see as the latest problems in this field?
11. What do you think are the important facts of the matter?
12. Are there better ways of interpreting the reported information that others have ignored?
13. How can you relate these previous studies into a general picture?
14. What new insight can you contribute?

Pre-Writing

15. How would you sum up your current attitude toward your topic in a sentence or two?
16. If you decided to use the answer to Question 15 as a working thesis for your paper, what information will you have to give your readers to convince them that your stand is a valid one? What questions of theirs will you have to answer? (The answers to this question, and to the next three questions, will suggest major points for an outline or another type of organizational plan.)
17. What one real question will your paper answer?
18. What is your current answer to this question?
19. What information do you have to support this?
20. What information do you still need to gather?

adapted from

Dossin Mary Mortimer. "Using Others' Words." *A Tutor's Guide*. 2nd ed. Ed. Ben Rafoth. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook, 2005. 164.