**The Question Formulation Technique for Research**

This tool for formulating and improving questions provides a rigorous, evidence-based process that can help you formulate questions to support your research. You can either follow all steps in the process or identify certain aspects that may be most beneficial to your ongoing research and work.

**Identify research topic**

1. What is your field of study?

2. What research topics or ideas have piqued your interest? Please list them.

3. What are some topics you might consider for your research? Please **list three** or more.

4. Choose one topic you are considering for your research. The topic you choose will become your focus for asking questions. You will work on this research topic throughout this activity. Write your research topic at the top of the page where you will record your questions.

**Produce questions**

You will now begin to produce questions about the research topic you chose. In order to produce questions please follow these four rules:

* Ask as many questions as you can about your research topic
* Do not stop to answer, analyze, or judge questions
* Write down every question exactly as it comes to mind
* Change any statements into questions

1. How might following these rules be different from how you usually produce questions?

2. Ask questions about the research topic you chose. Make sure to follow the rules and number the questions as you produce them. Use the page to record your questions.

**Work with closed and open-ended questions**

There are two types of questions you will now work with:

* Closed-ended questions can be answered with a “yes,” “no,” or with one word.
* Open-ended questions require an explanation and cannot be answered with a “yes,” “no,” or with one word.

1. You will now identify your questions as closed or open-ended. Label your closed-ended questions with a “C” and your open-ended questions with an “O.” Use the column titled “O/C” to label your questions on the page where you recorded your questions.

2. There are advantages and disadvantages to these different types of questions. Write some advantages/disadvantages for each type below. First work on open-ended, then closed-ended.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Closed-ended |  |  |
|  | Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Open-ended |  |  |

Depending on how you frame or word a question, the information you gather will be different and may steer your research in one direction rather than another.

3. Choose one of your closed-ended questions and reword it so it becomes open-ended. Add this new question to the bottom of your list of questions.

4. Choose one of your open-ended questions and reword it so it becomes closed-ended. Add this new question to the bottom of your list of questions.

**Rework questions**

1. Changing a word in your question can steer your research in a different direction, and it can affect its quality. Not only can reworking a question better target information, but it can also help improve the quality of your question. Do you have questions that you would like to rework? If so, add your reworked questions to the bottom of your list of questions.

**Prioritize**

The next step is for you to prioritize your questions.

1. From all of the questions you have asked so far, choose three priority questions you are most interested in using to guide a research project. While prioritizing, keep in mind the research topic you identified earlier. Please star your three priority questions in the column titled, “priority” on the page where you recorded the questions.

2. Why did you choose these questions?

3. How many questions did you ask?

4. Where are your priority questions in the sequence of your questions? (For example, if you asked 15 questions and your priority questions were 1, 7, and 15 one might describe this as beginning, middle, and end.)

**Further explore** **& develop your research questions and research agenda**

1. Choose one of your priority questions you would like to use as a guide for a research project. For this activity, it will be valuable to choose one question at this point; however, you will have the opportunity to review all your questions again later. Write this priority question at the top of a new page to record questions.

2. You will now ask additional questions about your priority question using a new page to record questions. Follow the four rules for producing questions: (*Ask as many questions as you can about the question you chose; Do not stop to answer, analyze, or judge questions; Write down every question exactly as it comes to mind; Change any statements into questions*). Make sure to follow the rules and number the questions as you produce them.

3. Review your questions. If you have any questions that you would like to rework or add please write them at the bottom of the page on which you most recently recorded your questions.

4. From all of the questions you have asked so far, choose three questions you are glad you generated through this process because they helped you think about something you might not have otherwise. Please star your three questions in the column titled, “Glad” on the pages you recorded questions.

5. From all of the questions you have asked so far, choose three questions that may help you advance your research. Please star your three questions in the column titled, “Adv.” on the pages you recorded questions.

6. Why did you choose these six questions?

**Reflect**

1. What did you learn?

2. What was helpful about this process of producing and working with questions?

3. What was challenging about this process of producing and working with questions?

4. How might this process affect your ability to ask questions in the future?

5. What did you notice about the quality of the questions you formulated?

6. How did this process affect the quality of your questions?