

The Question Formulation Technique (QFT) for Research: Guide

The Question Formulation Technique (QFT) for Research is a step-by-step process to formulating and improving questions to support your research. You can either follow all the steps in the process or identify certain aspects that may be most beneficial to your ongoing research and work. This guide details the steps of the process. Use the accompanying template to record your work as you go through the process.

I. Identify research topic

- What research topics or ideas have piqued your interest? Please list them.
- From these topics which ones you might consider for your research? Please **choose three**.
- Choose one topic from the three 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 (page 2 of the QFT for Research Template).

II. Produce questions

(Use Page 2 of the QFT for Research Template)

- 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

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

III. Work with closed and open-ended questions

(Use Page 2 of the QFT for Research Template)

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.
- 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 page 2 of the template.

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.



- 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.
- 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.

IV. Rework questions

(Use Page 2 of the QFT for Research Template)

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 on page 2 of the template

V. Prioritize

(Use Page 2 of the QFT for Research Template)

The next step is for you to prioritize your questions.

- 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 2 of the template.
- Why did you choose these questions?
- How many questions did you ask?
- 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.)

VI. Further explore & develop your research questions and research agenda

(Use Page 3 of the QFT for Research Template)

- 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 page 3 of the QFT for Research Template.
- You will now ask additional questions about your priority question using page 3 of the template. 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.
- Review your questions. If you have any questions that you would like to rework or add please write them at the bottom of page 3 of the template.



Source: The Right Question Institute

rightquestion.org

- 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 page 3 of the template
- 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 page 3 of the template
- Why did you choose these six questions?

VII. Reflect

(Use Page 4 of the QFT for Research Template)

- What did you learn?
- What was helpful about this process of producing and working with questions?
- What was challenging about this process of producing and working with questions?

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