Develop a Research Question and Search Strategy

Explore your topic through questioning
- Ask open ended questions like how? and why?
- Ask yourself why your topic is important- Why does it matter to you, and why should it matter to others?
- Reflect and identify the questions you feel are worth exploring through research.

Determine and evaluate your research question
Research questions should be specific enough to be well covered in the space available. Questions shouldn’t have simple yes or no answers, and should require research and analysis.

- Take your topic from general to specific.
- Ask yourself if your question is clear and focused.
- Does your research question have enough complexity to fill the pages required by the assignment?

Hypothesize your Research Strategy
Research is rarely linear. Consider the directions your research will take you.

- Who is an authority on your topic, and how can you find that information?
- If making an argument, what evidence will you need to support your claims?
  - Why is your argument important?
  - How might others challenge your argument?
- What types of sources will you need to support the claims that you are making?

Sample Research Questions:
Your research question should focus in on a specific angle of an over-arching topic; it should be clear to yourself and the reader which question you are trying to answer; it should be complex enough to invoke thought and interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is your question clear?</th>
<th>Is your question complex?</th>
<th>Is your question focused?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unclear: Why are social networking sites harmful?</td>
<td>Too Simple: How are doctors addressing diabetes in the U.S.?</td>
<td>Unfocused: What is the effect on the environment from global warming?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear: How are online users experiencing or addressing privacy issues on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter?</td>
<td>Appropriately Complex: What are the common traits of those suffering from diabetes in America, and how can these commonalities be used to aid the medical community in the prevention of the disease?</td>
<td>Focused: How is glacial melting affecting the penguins in Antarctica?</td>
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*Adapted from Indiana University Libraries*