

## Get Creative: Refine your Research Topic

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*Make your topic more interesting **and** researchable by using Personal Interest Questions and/or Contextual Interest Questions to refine your topic. Then, TQR It! to guide your research and writing.*

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Refine your topic using Personal Interest Questions**

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What do I find interesting about this topic?

What would I like to learn about my topic?

Who else might find this interesting?

What new perspective would I bring to it?

What do I NOT want to talk about (clichéd perspectives)?

## Refine your topic using Contextual Interest Questions<sup>1d</sup>

Context/Focus	Applied to your Topic:
<b>Time</b> Are you focusing on a specific period of time? Do you need to provide a historical overview of your topic?	
<b>Place</b> Does your topic connect your research to a particular region? If so, do you need to consider or address local social norms & values, economic & political systems, or languages?	
<b>Population</b> Does your topic focus on a particular population or demographic? Examples: age, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, species...	
<b>Viewpoint</b> Do you plan to approach your topic through a particular lens? Examples: legal, medical, ethical, biological, psychological, economic, political, educational...	

## TQR it! – Developing a research question<sup>2</sup>

**Topic:** I am studying \_\_\_\_\_ . . .

**Question:** . . . because I want to find out who/how/why \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
*Identifies what you do not know or understand about your topic.*

**Rationale:** . . .in order to understand how/why/what \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*Answers the "So what?" question, indicating why you and (more importantly) your audience will be interested in your research problem.*

### Example Topic: Battle of the Alamo

**Topic:** I am studying differences among nineteenth-century versions of the story of the Alamo...

**Question:** ...because I want to find out how politicians used stories of great events to shape public opinion,

**Rationale:** ...in order to show how politicians use elements of popular culture to advance their political goals.



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1. Modified from the University of Washington Libraries – Research 101 tutorial: <http://www.lib.washington.edu/uwill/research101/>
2. Modified from Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2003). *The craft of research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.