

CHOOSING A TOPIC: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The success of your project will depend on your ability to discover or invent a good research question. By thinking about the topic, the questions you have about the topic, and the significance of your topic, you can develop a strong research paper.

You can help yourself think about your project by describing it in a three-step sentence that states your **TOPIC + QUESTION + SIGNIFICANCE** (or **TQS**):

TOPIC: I am working on the topic of _____,

QUESTION: because I want to find out _____,

SIGNIFICANCE: so that I can help others understand _____.

Don't worry if at first you can't think of something to put as the significance in the third step. As you develop your answer, you'll find ways to explain why your question is worth asking!

TQS sentence example:

I am working on the topic of stories about the Battle of the Alamo,

because I want to find out why its story became a national legend,

so that I can help my classmates understand how such regional myths have shaped America's sense of a national identity.

Note: The TQS formula is meant to prime your thinking. Use it to plan and test your question, but don't expect to put it in your paper in exactly this form.