

Research Interests and Research Questions

In addition to all the advice I will give you about asking questions you don't already know the answer to, are genuinely interested in finding out about, and can link to a genuine interest and potential "so what?" for readers, please consider this advice. And, as always, ask me questions.

Problems and Fixes for Research Interests

To begin to pose a research question, first you must identify an interest. After some research, you will be able to form a question based on your interests and your preliminary reading. But you need to be careful in not making your initial interest too narrow or too broad.

Too narrow/closed-ended	Better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is the median price of a single-family home in East Austin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Have patterns in public school enrollment since 2015 affected the median price of a single-family home in East Austin?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">How many women play massive multiplayer online games?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How do female World of Warcraft players combat gender harassment in the game?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">How many Texas universities require two semesters of general-education writing courses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How have five Texas private universities responded to changes in student preparedness for college writing in the last five years?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Which Supreme Court justices are "originalists"?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What do Justice Gorsuch's opinions since joining the Supreme Court demonstrate about the coherence of his version of originalist interpretation?
Too broad/open-ended	Better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does sunscreen work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does applying SPF 50 sunscreen to the face as directed by the manufacturer lower the risk of melanoma in adults over 25?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">What are the effects of scooter and bicycle rental services on quality of life in East Austin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Have scooter rental services affected sidewalk mobility in East Austin in the last three years?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is Bitcoin bad?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is cryptocurrency mining in Keflavík, Iceland sustainable?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does peer review help student writers learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does grading students on their peer review advice affect the uptake of their advice by other student writers?

- What's the best way to write an introduction?

- How should graduate students in political science be taught to establish a space for their own research when working with published scholarship?

Basic Structure of a Research Question

After you have a research interest that is neither too narrow nor too broad, and have done preliminary research, you can begin to narrow the interest and pose a question. Here is the basic structure of a research question:

I am investigating _____ *[what, specifically?]*

because I want to learn _____ *[what, specifically, do you hope to understand?]*

so that _____ *[insert a description of the audience who will also care about this question]*

can better understand _____ *[speculate what you believe the "so what"? of your project might be. So what? Why is it worthwhile? What will it contribute to the ongoing conversations relevant to your question? Why might anyone besides you care about the answer to this question?].*

(I am indebted to book [The Craft of Research](#) for this structure)