

Successful research involves more than just finding all the information out there about a topic. You will never be able to find—or read—all this information. Having a narrow topic will help you to keep their projects to a manageable size, but you can focus your research and project even more by developing research questions.

Writing Research Questions

Good historical research questions will allow you to investigate issues of cause and effect, change over time, differences in perspective, etc. What were the causes of past events? What were the effects? How did past decisions or actions affect future choices? What has changed?

- Research questions are different than information-seeking questions. Information-seeking questions help you to understand the basic facts about your topic. When was the 19th amendment passed? How does a bill become a law? You will likely answer these questions just by reading an encyclopedia article about your topic.

WORKSHEET: WRITING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Brainstorm a variety of questions about your topic. Use questions to guide your research.

Part of Project	Sample: Rosa Parks	Your Topic
<p>HISTORICAL CONTEXT (¶ 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What outside people, ideas or events were going on to influence your topic? • What other information does your viewer need to know to understand the background of your topic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was going on in the Civil Rights Movement at the time? • How were African Americans treated? 	
<p>MAIN TOPIC (¶ 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the main players and what are they doing to prepare for the main events of the topic? • What are the events leading up to the main event? • What happened? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who was Rosa Parks? Why did Rosa Parks give up her bus seat? What were leaders in Montgomery doing to prepare for this event? • What happened after Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat? 	
<p>SHORT TERM EFFECTS (¶ 4,5,6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of actions were taken? (SPICE) • What are some of the reactions to the main event? Include both positive and negative • Did anything change right away? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did everyone agree on the boycott? • Who participated and how? • What laws were being challenged? • What changed right away in Montgomery because of the boycott? • How did people across the country hear about and react to it? 	
<p>SIGNIFICANT CHANGE (¶ 7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are things different because of the topic? • Did this topic influence other historical events? • Why is this topic important in history? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the Montgomery Bus Boycott a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement? • How did King become a national leader after this event? 	