**Researchable Questions**

**Choose a Question that is Neither Too Broad or Too Narrow**

For example, if your topic deals with juvenile delinquency*,* you might ask the following questions:

1. What is the 2012 rate of juvenile delinquency in the U.S.?
2. What can we do to reduce juvenile delinquency in the U.S.?
3. Does education play a role in reducing juvenile delinquents' return to crime?

Once you complete your list, review/evaluate your questions in order to choose a usable one that is neither too broad nor too narrow.

In this case, the best research question is "c." Question "a" is too narrow, since it can be answered with a simple statistic. Question "b" is too broad; it implies that the researcher will cover many tactics for reducing juvenile delinquency that could be used throughout the country. Question "c," on the other hand, is focused enough to research in some depth

So… **Start asking questions!** Taking into consideration all of the above, start asking yourself open-ended “how” and “why” questions about your general topic. For example, “How did the slave trade evolve in the 1850s in the American South?” or “Why were slave narratives effective tools in working toward the abolishment of slavery?”

Always **Evaluate your question:***Is your research question clear?* With so much research available on any given topic, research questions must be as clear as possible in order to be effective in helping the writer direct his or her research.

*Is your research question focused?* Research questions must be specific enough to be well covered in the space available. (See flip side for examples of focused vs. unfocused research questions.)

*Is your research question complex?* Research questions should not be answerable with a simple “yes” or “no” or by easily-found facts. They should, instead, require both research and analysis on the part of the writer.

**Checklist of your Potential Research Questions:**

1) Is the research question something I/others care about? Is it arguable?  
2) Is the research question a new spin on an old idea, or does it solve a problem?

3) Is it too broad or too narrow?  
4) Is the research question researchable within the given time frame and location?

5) What information is needed?

--or for more technical based research:

1) Define or measure a specific fact or gather facts about a specific phenomenon.

2) Match facts and theory.  
3) Evaluate and compare two theories, models, or hypotheses.  
4) Prove that a certain method is more effective than other methods.