

How to formulate your research question?

And how to plan your research activities

Pavλίna Tassanyi, Filip Strych, June 14th, 2018

Outline

Key features of a research question

How to develop a research question

Difference between a research question and a thesis statement

Examples

How to manage your time when researching your topic

Topic

Choose **something you are interested in** – you will spend a lot of time on it

Choose **something you can handle** – both intellectually and mentally

I'm not going to write about:

- **Euclidean algorithm** *if I don't know what an algorithm is ... and hate math*
- **Latin poetry in Latin** *if I don't know Latin... and hate poetry*
- **Suicide rate amongst teenagers** *if I don't have the numbers (and don't know where to get them) ... and hate statistics*

Research question – RQ

RQ is something that can help you **stay focused** while writing but only if it's **defined properly**

Since **you have limit** you must be **as precise as possible** – your EE must end (eventually)

It is like a spine which holds the body (the research itself) together – as you progress, you will support it (adding more “bones and muscles”)

A good RQ is:

Relevant

Manageable

Substantial and original

Interesting

Arguable

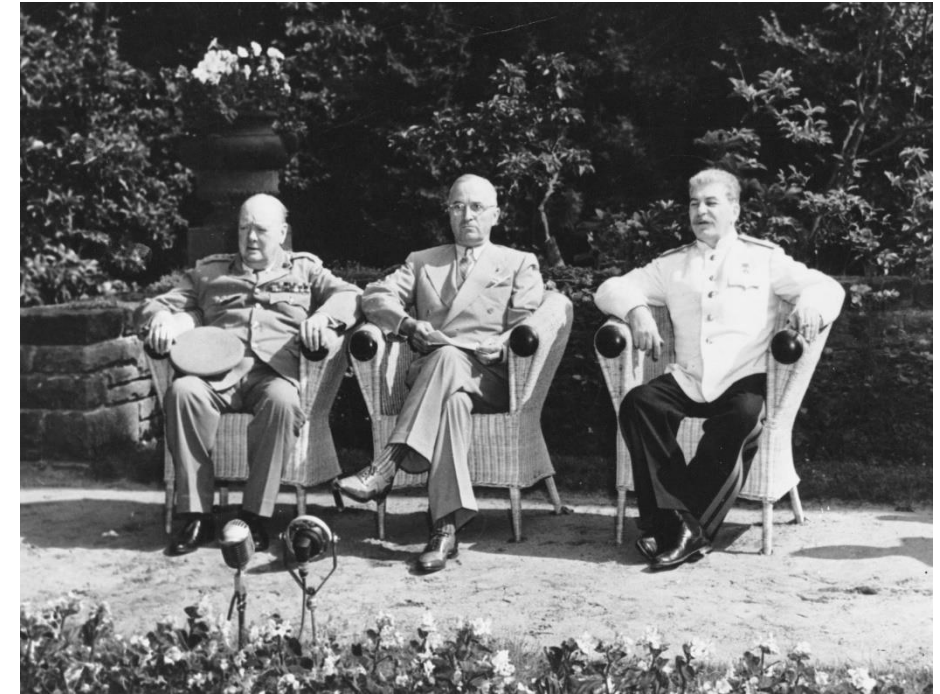
Relevant RQ

Does the question fit your topic?

Has the question been answered before?

Is it too easy to answer?

- *How did the Second World War change the world?*
- *What were the social impacts of Second World War in the Central Bohemia region?*



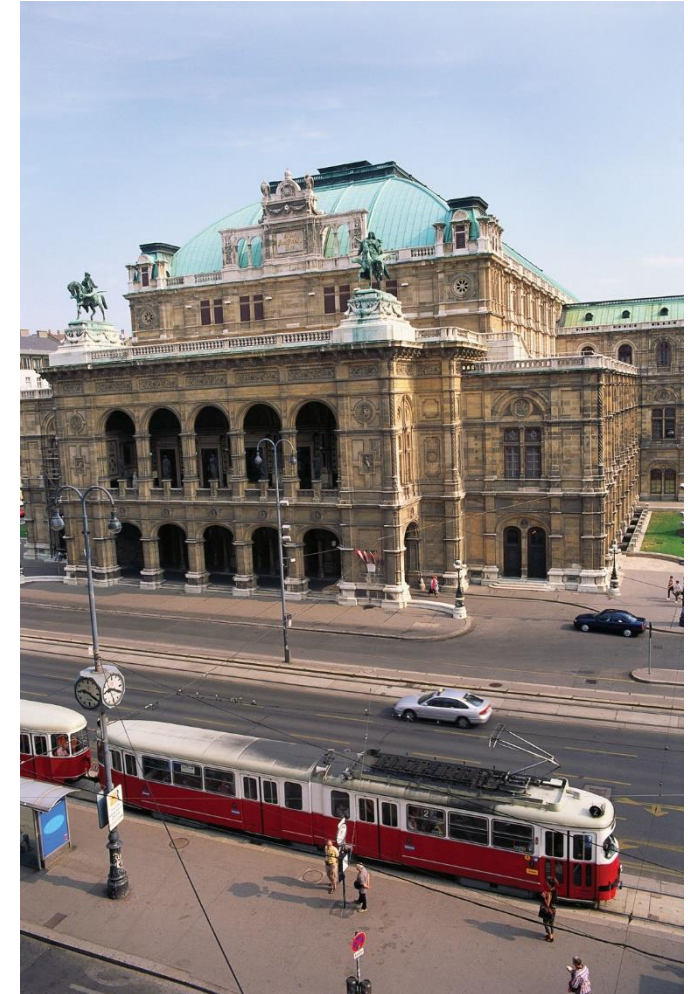
Churchill, Winston; Truman, Harry; Stalin, Joseph [Image].
Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved 4 June 2018, from
<https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/assembly/view/92072>

Manageable RQ

Are you realistic about the scope and scale of the topic?

Can you access and collect all necessary sources and/or data?

- *What are the urban problems of big European cities?*
- *What are the differences between Vienna and Prague tramway system?*



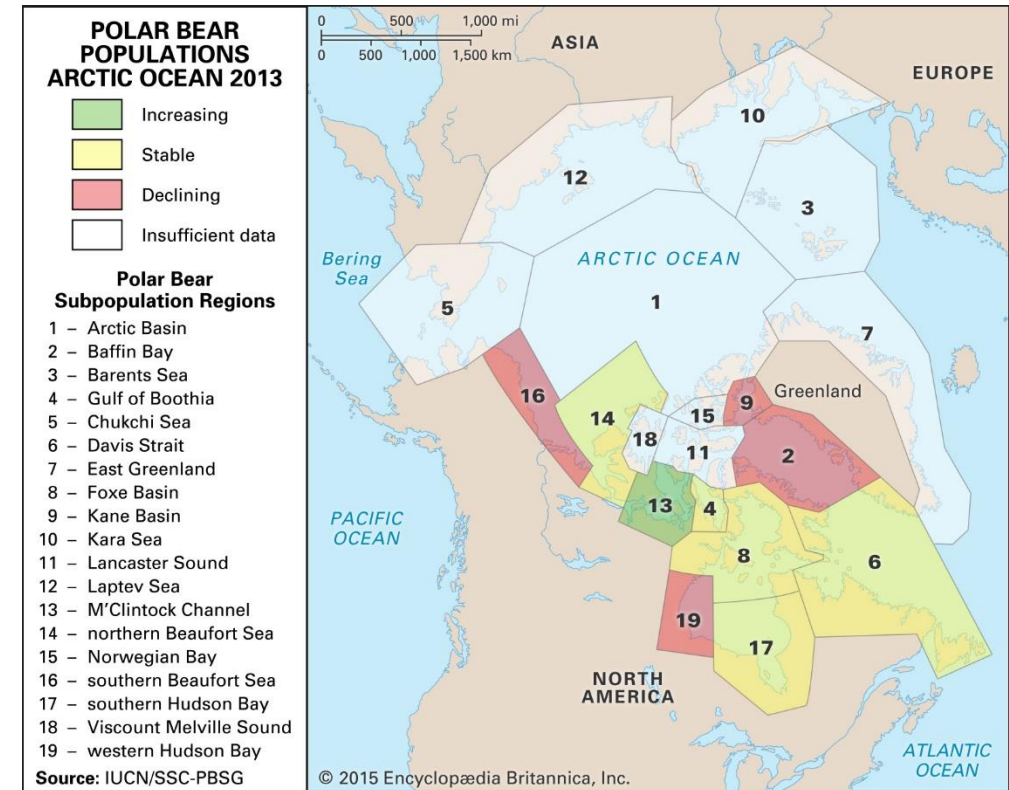
Vienna State Opera [Image]. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved 5 June 2018, from <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/assembly/view/228985>

Substantial and original RQ

Showing your own
imagination/ability to analyze

Showing how you interpret the
subject of your essay

- *What is the effect of global warming?*
- *How is glacial melting affecting polar bears in the Arctic?*



Polar bear populations in the Arctic [Image].
Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved 4 June 2018, from
<https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/assembly/view/202245>

Interesting RQ

What is the most important aspect of your RQ (for you, for others)?

You will spend time working on it

Try not to be flashy

- *Why is social media so addictive?*
- *How does Facebook use psychology to steal our attention and why is it harmful for our productivity?*



Facebook: Facebook profile page, Image, from *Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed June 5, 2018, <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/assembly/view/148392>.

Arguable RQ

Consider the supporting arguments and logic

Think about possible limitations and obstacles

Take into account counterarguments

- *Is Africa an underdeveloped region?*
- *How can Nigeria benefit from global trade and become a more developed country?*



Nigeria [Image]. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved 4 June 2018, from <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/assembly/view/225285>

A good RQ is:

Relevant

Manageable

Substantial and original

Interesting

Arguable

Remember, if you don't ask a good question, you cannot expect a good answer, or any answer.

Research question vs Thesis statement

Asking something –
question

I have question
I'm working on answering it

Claiming something –
statement

I think I have the answer
I'm **working on proving it**

Thesis statement: Examples

The Second World War did not change the world.

People in Eastern Europe started being skeptical of the right wing parties after the Second World War.

There are effects of global warming.

Producing single-used plastics has caused severe damages to the world environment in recent years.

Thesis statement: Examples

Social media is addictive.

Facebook is built to steal its user's attention.

Preliminary research

General topic  specific RQ

Search in current books, periodicals, journals:

What has been already written, described?

How did the previous authors make their inquiry more specific?

General topic  specific RQ

Ask questions – plan your research:

Why	Why do I want to write about it (interesting, not covered yet)
What	What do I plan to argue? What do I want to prove?
How	How will I prove my point? Will I be able to cover it in my theses? Which method will I use?

Tips

Discuss your questions with someone (supervisor at least)

Try to be as specific as possible right from the beginning

What kind of argument are you hoping to make or support?

What do you need to do in order to accomplish your research?

What to do if your research disputes your argument?

Don't forget: Negative results are results too

Exercise

Choose your own topic

Ask yourself what you want to research

Try to develop a basic research question

Time management

Time management

Have you ever used some kind of time management?

If not, why?

Why is it important to manage your time?

How can it help you and your research?

Plan your research in advance

Start immediately

Work each day at least a bit

Plan each stage of your research and set your own deadlines

Always double/triple your estimated time

Stay in touch with your supervisor

With a plan:

You will know what to do next

You will stop wondering

You will advance to the next stage



Roosevelt, Franklin D.; Churchill, Winston; Yalta Conference, Image, from Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed June 5, 2018, <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/assembly/view/72138>.

Be aware of:

Loops: *"I do not have enough resources/data."*

Procrastination: *"I need to clear my desk before I start."*

Unrealistic goals/achievements: *"I will write my essay a week before the deadline. It's too far from now."*



Inside the mind of a master procrastinator | Tim Urban

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382 TIS. 3,6 TIS. SDÍLET



TED
Publikováno 6. 4. 2016

ODEBÍRAT 10 MIL.

TEDTalks. Inside the mind of a master procrastinator | Tim Urban.
Video, from *YouTube*, accessed June 5, 2018
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arj7oStGLkU>.

You can get stuck:

Writing: “It has to be nicely done. The other things will go in hand.”

Editing: “I will do references later. Now I don’t have time for this.”

Summary

Think about your research question as a spine

Ask questions: “What” and “How” do you plan to discuss your research?

Double the estimated time

Do not procrastinate. Work a bit each day 😊

Evaluate us