



Twenty Questions for Research Writing

Research writing can be described as follows: Gathering information ↔ Analyzing and synthesizing ↔ Communicating/Writing. Daily writing will help you with a research paper more than anything else: Every day, take 10 or 15 minutes to answer one of the questions.

1. What topic have you chosen for your research paper?
2. What do you know now about the topic?
3. What do you want to find out?
4. Are you aware of any controversies regarding this topic? If so, what are they, and what is your current stand on the issue?
5. Have you noticed any areas of disagreement among your sources?
6. Which of the viewpoints seems the most valid to you? Why?
7. Do you have any unanswered questions at this point?
8. Did anything surprise you as you gathered information?
9. What has been the most interesting aspect of the material you've gathered so far?
10. After reviewing your data sources, what do you see as the latest problems in the field of your topic?
11. What do you think are the important facts of the matter?
12. Are there better ways of interpreting the reported information that previous authors have ignored?
13. How can you relate these previous studies into a general picture?
14. What new insight can you contribute?
15. Considering all the above, how would you sum up your current attitude toward your topic in a sentence or two?
16. If you decide to use the answer to Question 15 as a working thesis for your paper, what information will you have to give your reader to convince them that your stand is a valid one? What questions of theirs will you have to answer? (The answers to these questions will suggest major points for your outline.)
17. What one real question will your paper answer?
18. What is your current answer to this question?
19. What information do you have to support this?
20. What information do you still need to gather?

*Not all of these questions will work for all topics, of course, so use them to deal with whatever information and topics have been chosen. Go back to questions at different points in the process and see how their answers change as more information gathered and the topic is re-examined.

Taken From: Using Others' Words Quoting, Summarizing, and Documenting Sources by Mary Mortimore Dossin

