

Slide 1



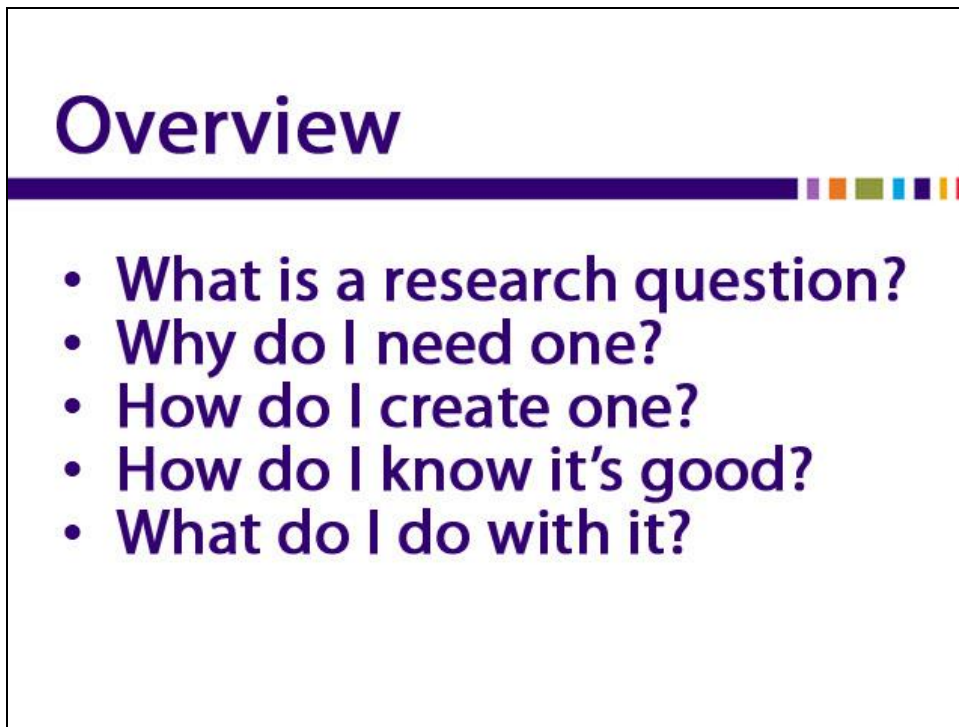
Slide 1 features a white background with a purple horizontal bar at the top. Below the bar, the title "Developing a Research Question" is written in a large, bold, purple font. A grey button with the word "Start" is centered below the title. In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for "Library" with a colorful bar of vertical lines. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for "LAURIER" with a yellow maple leaf icon.

Developing a Research Question

Start

Library LAURIER

Slide 2



Slide 2 features a white background with a purple horizontal bar at the top. Below the bar, the title "Overview" is written in a large, bold, purple font. Below the title, there is a list of five bullet points in a bold, purple font. The list items are: "What is a research question?", "Why do I need one?", "How do I create one?", "How do I know it's good?", and "What do I do with it?".

Overview

- What is a research question?
- Why do I need one?
- How do I create one?
- How do I know it's good?
- What do I do with it?

Hello. In this video we'll be looking at research questions.

Specifically, we'll go over what a research question is, why you need one, how you can create one and check to make sure it is a good one, and, finally, what you do with it once you have one.

Slide 3



First, let's look at what a research question is.

Slide 4



A research question is an actual question you ask yourself about your topic.

It is some aspect of the topic that you are interested in and want to find out more about.

Slide 5

Rajiv K. Sinha & Naomi Mandel

Preventing Digital Music Piracy: The Carrot or the Stick?

The goal of this article is to ascertain the factors that govern consumers' willingness to pirate a digital product, such as a digital music track. The authors assess the tendency to pirate with both indirect measures (e.g., willingness to pay for the legal alternative) and direct measures (e.g., piracy preference). Whether measured indirectly or directly, the tendency to pirate varies to different extents, on three key factors: positive incentives (e.g., improved perceived risk of piracy), and consumer negative incentives are a strong deterrent for others. Conversely, positive incentives, such as are among all the consumer segments studied, for the recording industry.

**Research question:
Why do consumers
pirate digital music?**

All good academic research starts with a research question. The research question doesn't usually show up in the final paper, but we can see evidence that there was one. In this article, the authors state the goal of their article: to assess the factors that make people willing to pirate digital music.

They don't tell us what their research question was, but based on their goal we can assume they had one, and it was something like Why do consumers pirate digital music?

You will almost never be asked specifically to create a research question as part of a research paper, but you should always start with one anyway.

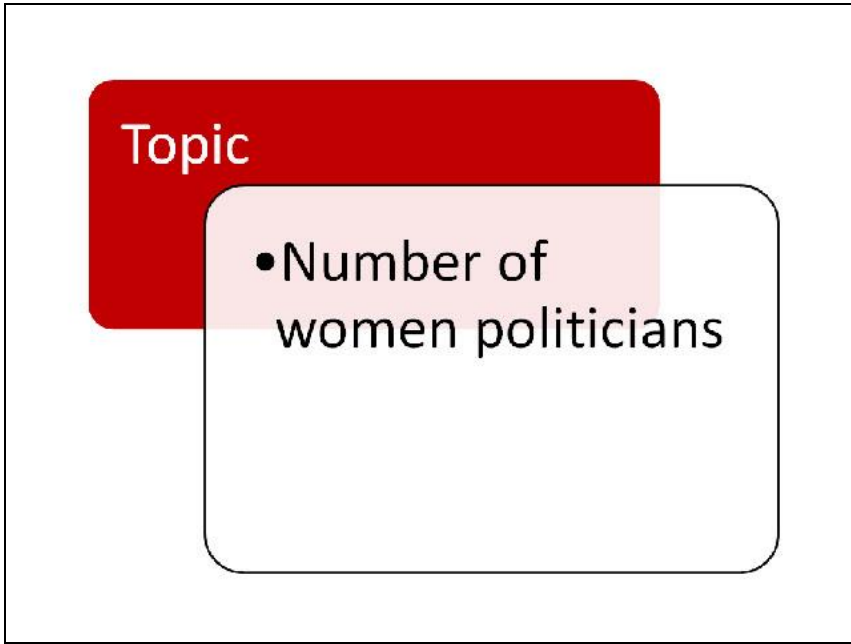
Slide 6



Why Do I Need a Research Question?

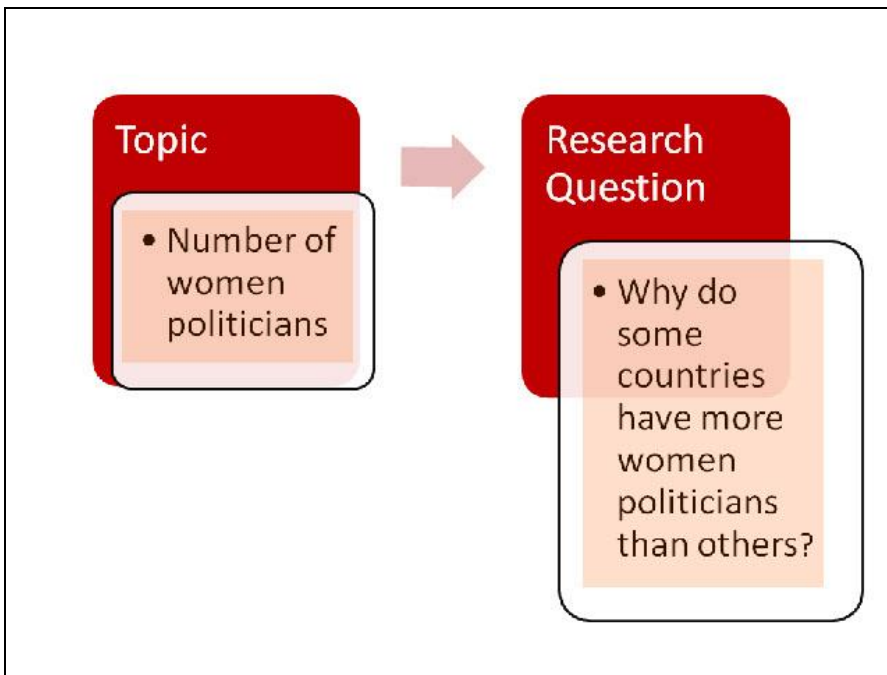
Now that you know what a research question is, why do you need one?

Slide 7



Most students find a topic, then start working on their research paper. For example, you might decide your topic is the number of women in politics.

Slide 8



A topic is a starting point for a research question. You ask a research question about a topic. For example, on our topic we could ask the research question "Why do some countries have more women politicians than others?"

There are lots of possible research questions you could ask about any topic. For example, we could also ask "Does having more women politicians lead to better laws for women?"

Picking one question helps you focus, and gives you an angle to approach the topic. This helps you streamline your research and writing, which will save you a lot of time, and make your papers better.

Slide 9



Now you know why you should use a research question. Next we'll find out how to create one.

Slide 10



It isn't hard to come up with a question. We'll follow a few steps. First, pick a topic you are interested in.

Then, find one aspect of the topic you want to focus on. Think of some questions you could ask about that aspect.

Pick one, then make sure it is a good question.

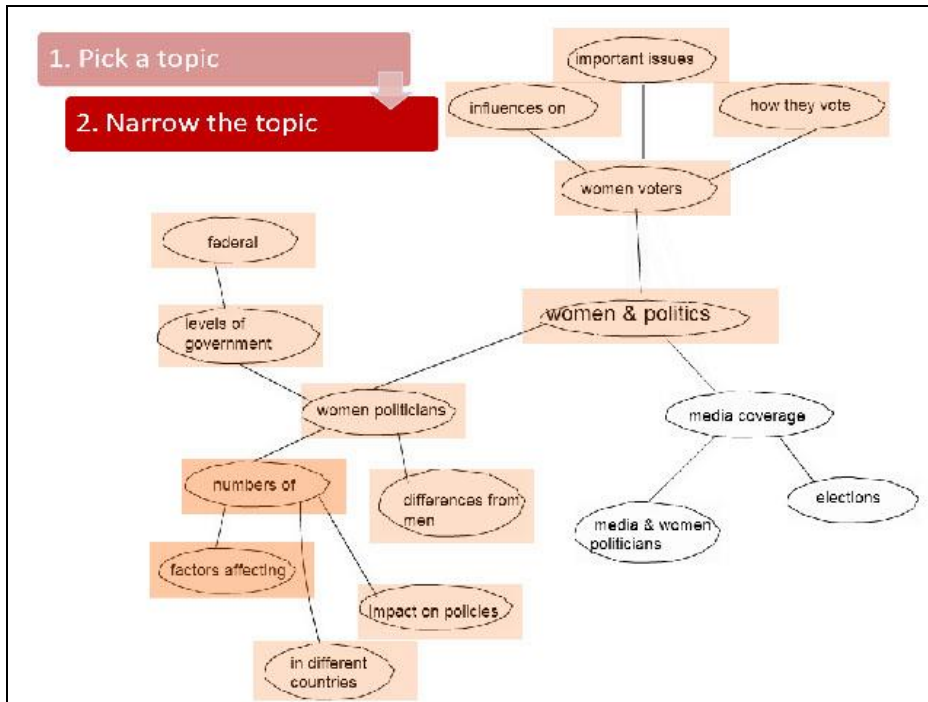
Slide 11

1. Pick a topic

women and politics

First, pick a topic you are interested in. We'll go through the steps using an example. We'll use our earlier topic: women and politics.

Slide 12



Once you've picked a topic, the next step is to think of what different aspects of the topic there are, and pick one.

In our example, we've mapped out some of the different aspects of the topic women and politics. One might be women voters, how they vote, what influences them, or what issues are important to them.

Another might be women politicians, how they are different from male politicians, and what levels of government they are at, or how many there are, what affects that, how it varies in different countries, and how it influences government policies.

Once you've mapped out some possibilities, pick one aspect. We'll pick numbers of women politicians, and specifically what affects that.

Slide 13

1. Pick a topic

2. Narrow the topic

3. List some questions

Why do some countries have more women politicians than others?

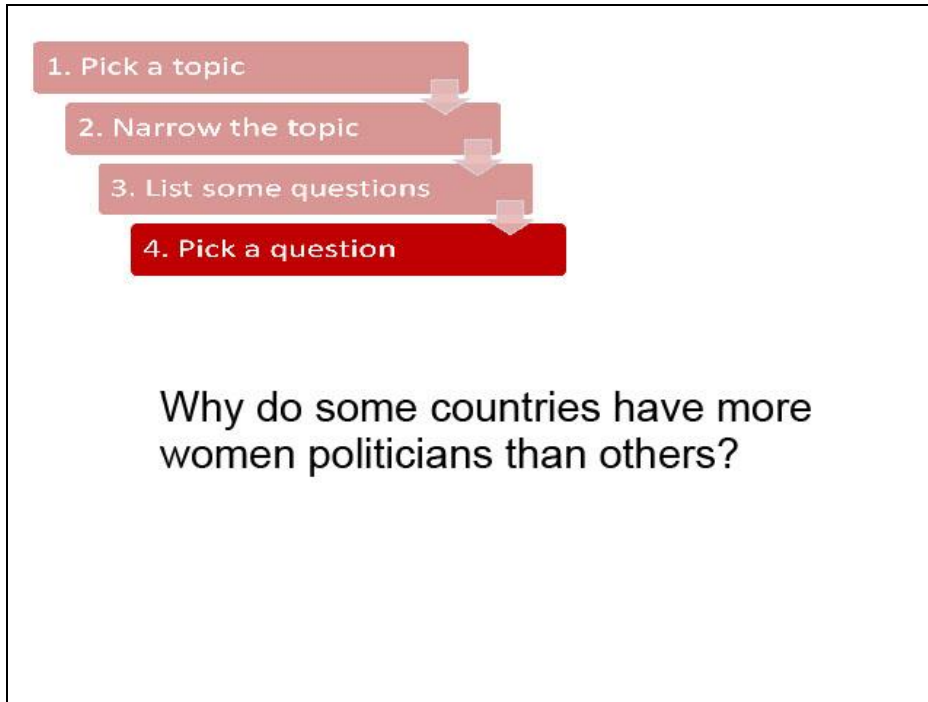
Why does Canada have fewer high-profile women in politics than the U.S?

Once you've narrowed your topic, think of some possible questions about that topic.

Why and how questions are best. For example, we could ask questions like Why do some countries have more women politicians than others?

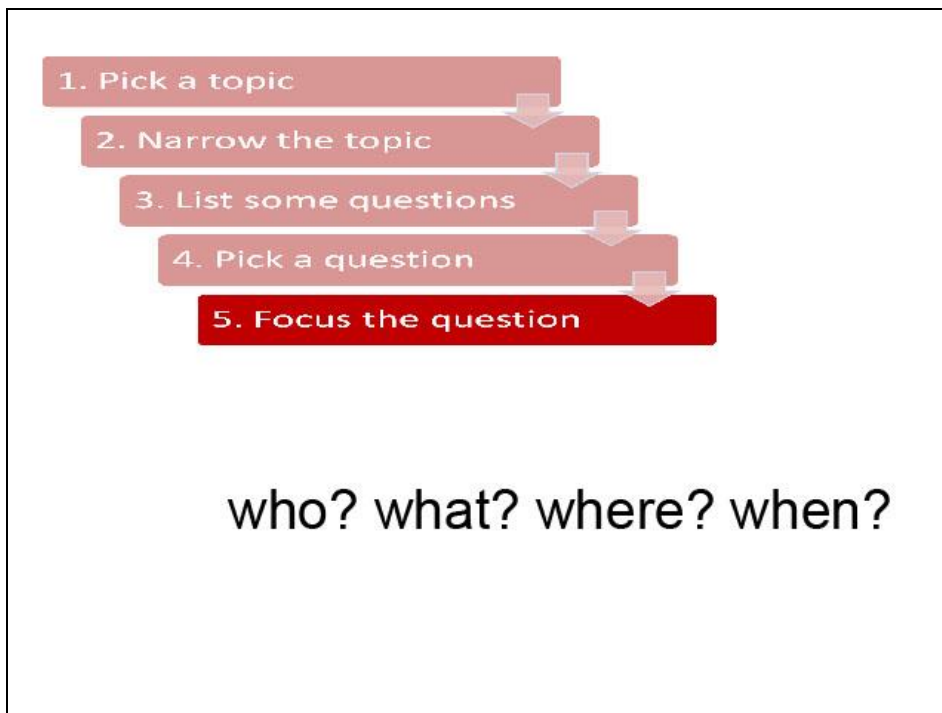
Why does Canada have fewer high-profile women in politics than the U.S?

Slide 14



When you are done, pick one to work with. We'll pick "Why do some countries have more women politicians than others?"

Slide 15



Once you've picked your question, look at it carefully and try to make it as specific and clear as possible.

Make sure your question is clear about who, what, where, and when you are talking about.

Slide 16

Original question:

Why do some countries have more women politicians than others?

More specific:

Why does Sweden have more women politicians at the national level than Canada?

Let's see how we can make this more specific. We don't want to know about women politicians at all levels of government, so we'll specify the national level only.

"Some countries" is also quite vague. We should focus on some specific countries to compare, like Canada and Sweden.

In that case, our more specific question would be "Why does Sweden have more women politicians at the national level than Canada?"

Slide 17



How Do I Know If It's a Good Question?

That's how you come up with a research question. But how do you know if it is a good question?

Slide 18

Good Questions:

- One issue only
- Requires analysis, thinking (how, why)
- Specific, focused (who, what, where, when)
- Clear, no vague words

A good question focuses on only one issue and doesn't try to fit in too much.

It requires analysis and thinking, and doesn't have an obvious answer. "How" and "why" questions are best for this.

It is specific and focused, not too broad. It is also clear, with all vague words defined or made more specific.

Slide 19

Is this research question good or bad:

How does the media represent
Islam?

Good

Bad

Now you try. Here is a research question: How does the media represent Islam? Is this question good or bad? You choose.

Slide 20

Right answer.

How would you improve the question?

Question: How does the media represent Islam?

Continue

Good answer. How would you improve this question?

Slide 21

Question: How does the media represent Islam?

Revision:

How have newspapers in North America represented Islamic women since 9/11?

Here's what I got. This question is too vaguely worded. It's good to be more specific about who, what, where, when.

For example, "media" could be newspapers, tv, advertising, music videos, etc. It's best to specify which we mean.

Also, where do we mean? Are we talking about media in Canada? In South America? In India?

"Islam" is also quite general. Do we mean the religion as a whole? Some aspects of it? People who are Muslim?

A better, more specific question would be How have newspapers in North America represented Islamic women since 9/11?

Slide 22

Question: How does the media represent Islam?

Revision:

How have newspapers in North America represented Islamic women since 9/11?

Sorry, but this isn't a great question. It is not specific enough in its wording.

It should be clearer who, what, where, and when it is talking about. For example, media could be newspapers, tv, music videos, advertising, etc.

It could be media in Canada, South America, or India. Islam could mean the religion, some aspect of the religion, or people who are Muslim.

A better, more specific question would be How have newspapers in North America represented Islamic women since 9/11?

Slide 23

Let's try again.

What impact has global warming had on the environment in Ontario?

Good

Bad

Try again. Is this question good or bad: What impact has global warming had on the environment in Ontario?

Slide 24

Actually it's not a bad question, but could be improved.

What impact has global warming had on the environment in Ontario?

This isn't a bad question. Questions can almost always be improved though. You could improve this question by specifying what aspect of the environment you mean. For example, you could focus on water levels, or impact on plants and animals.

Slide 25



**What Do I Do With
It Once I Have One?**

You don't usually put your research question into your final paper.

What do you do with it then?

Slide 26

Why does Sweden have more women politicians at the national level than Canada?

What information do you need to answer this question?

Your research question will help focus your research. You will need to find information that helps you answer your research question.

For our question on why Sweden has more women politicians than Canada, we might need some statistics.

We might also need to know the reasons Sweden has a lot of women politicians. Then, we would need to know how that is different from Canada.

Knowing what information we need to answer our question helps make the research more efficient.

Slide 27

Research Question:

Why does Sweden have more women politicians at the national level than Canada?

Thesis:

Sweden has more women politicians than Canada because Sweden's electoral system encourages the participation of women better than Canada's.

Your research question also helps you create your thesis. Your thesis summarizes the answer to your question in one sentence.

For example, our thesis might be: Sweden has more women politicians because their electoral system encourages women to participate better than Canada's does.

The rest of your paper would support the thesis with more detailed arguments. Your whole paper will focus on answering your research question, which helps give structure and focus to your paper.

Slide 28

Try It Yourself



Use the Research
Question Worksheet
(on this web page)

Try it yourself! Create a research question for your paper.

Use the research question worksheet, which you can find on the same web page as this video.

Slide 29

Questions?



library.wlu.ca/help/askus



If you have any questions, please ask us at library.wlu.ca/help/askus