

## Creating Your Research Question or Statement

A well-written research question or statement clarifies exactly what your project is designed to do. It should have the following characteristics:

- The research *topic* is easily identifiable.
- The *purpose* of the research is clear.
- The question/statement is *focused*. The people who are listening to or reading the question/statement will know what you are going to be researching.

A good question requires thought and planning. Below are three examples of initial questions or statements and how they were improved.

Unacceptable Question/Statement	Why?	Acceptable Question/Statement
Is the Internet changing the way we live?	Too general	How have social networking websites changed the way we interact with each other?
Viable farmland is a shared resource.	Too general	When urban communities spread and development of farmland occurs, the impact is shared.
Are teenagers in my town more conscious about environmental issues than adults?	Too specific, unless you're going to generate your own data.	Are North American teenagers more conscious about environmental issues than adults?

## Evaluating Your Research Question or Statement

You can use the following checklist to determine if your research question/statement is effective.

1. Does the question/statement clearly identify the main objective of the research? After you read the question/statement to a few classmates, can they tell you what you will be researching?
2. Are you confident that the question/statement will lead you to sufficient data to reach a conclusion?
3. Is the question/statement interesting? Does it make you want to learn more?
4. Is the topic you chose purely factual, or are you likely to encounter an issue, with different points of view?

## PROJECT EXAMPLE

## Writing a research question

Walther chose pests and invasive species affecting the Western provinces and territories as his topic. Below, he describes how he determined that his research question for this topic is effective.

### Walther's Question

My question is, "Which pests or invasive species cause the greatest damage to our natural resources in the Western provinces and territories, and what can be done to control these threats?"

I evaluated my question using the research question checklist, and I feel that it is a good one. Here is why:

1. My question tells what I plan to do—I read my question to members of my family, and they all described what I had in mind.
2. I have already found a lot of data available on pests and invasive species that exist across Canada, and it includes a lot of historical information about their spread and the damage that they cause.
3. I'm really interested in the environment and what we can do to protect it, but I don't know much about this type of problem. I'll find out new things and perhaps some course of action that I can get involved in. Whatever I discover should also interest some of my classmates, as it's about the resources we use in the area where we live.
4. I expect that I will find several different threats that differ by region, and I hope I will be able to conclude what can be done to help in these situations.

### Your Turn

- A. Write a research question for your topic.
- B. Use the checklist to evaluate your question. Adjust your question as needed.
- C. Make an appointment to discuss the pros and cons of your research question with your teacher. Be prepared to discuss your plan for collecting the data you will need to come to a conclusion. Adjust your question as needed.