The Question Formulation Technique for Research

This tool for formulating research questions provides a rigorous, evidence-based process that can help you shape your research questions.

Identify research topic
1. Identify/Name a field of study – a subject area

2. List several topics covered in the subject area that are of interest to you.

3. Name which of these topics you are doing research on or might want to research. Please **list three** or more.

4. Choose one of the topics and write this topic at the top of the page where you will record your questions. The topic you choose will become your focus for asking questions. You will work on this research topic throughout this activity. Write your research topic at the top of

Produce questions
You will now begin to produce questions about the research topic you chose. In order to produce questions, please follow these four rules:
- Ask as many questions as you can about your research topic
- Do not stop to answer, analyze, or judge questions
- Write down every question exactly as it comes to mind
- Change any statements into questions

1. How might following these rules be different from how you usually produce research questions?

2. Ask questions about the research topic you chose. Make sure to follow the rules and number the questions as you produce them. Use the page to record your questions.

Work with closed and open-ended questions
There are two types of questions you will now work with:
- Closed-ended questions can be answered with a "yes," "no," or with one word.
- Open-ended questions require an explanation and cannot be answered with a "yes," "no," or with one word.

1. You will now identify your questions as closed or open-ended. Label your closed-ended questions with a "C" and your open-ended questions with an "O." Use the column titled "O/C" to label your questions on the page where you recorded your questions.

2. There are advantages and disadvantages to these different types of questions.

> ➤ Depending on how you frame or word a question, the information you gather will be different and may steer your research in one direction rather than another.

3. Choose one of your closed-ended questions and reword it so it becomes open-ended. Add this new question to the bottom of your list of questions.

4. Choose one of your open-ended questions and reword it so it becomes closed-ended. Add this new question to the bottom of your list of questions.

Rework questions
1. Changing a word in your question can steer your research in a different direction, and it can affect its quality. Not only can reworking a question better target information, but it can also help improve the quality of your question. Do you have questions that you would like to rework? If so, add your reworked questions to the bottom of your list of questions.

Prioritize
The next step is for you to prioritize your questions.

1. From all of the questions you have asked so far, choose three questions that can best help you shape your research. While prioritizing, keep in mind the research topic you identified earlier. Then, mark your three priority questions in the column titled "priority" on the page where you recorded the questions.

2. Why did you choose these questions?

3. Where are your priority questions in the sequence of your questions? (For example, if you asked 15 questions and your priority questions were 1, 7, and 15, one might describe this as beginning, middle, and end.)

Further explore & develop your research questions and research agenda
1. Choose one of your priority questions that can best help you shape your research. For this activity, it will be valuable to choose one question at this point; however, you will have the opportunity to review all your questions again later. Write this priority question at the top of a new page to record questions.

2. You will now produce additional questions about your priority question using a new page to record questions. Follow the four rules for producing questions: (*Ask as many questions as you can about the question you chose; Do not stop to answer, analyze, or judge questions; Write down every question exactly as it comes to mind; Change any statements into questions*). Make sure to follow the rules and number the questions as you produce them.

3. Review your list of questions. If they spark any new questions or you want to revise any of them, write additional questions at the bottom of the page on which you most recently recorded your questions.

4. From all of the questions you have asked so far, choose three questions you are pleased that you were able to formulate by going through the process because they helped you think about something you might not have otherwise. Please mark your three questions in the column titled, "Pleased" on the pages you recorded questions.

5. From all of the questions you have asked so far, choose three questions that can best help you shape your research. Please mark your three questions in the column titled, "Shape" on the pages where you first recorded questions.

6. Why did you choose these six questions?

Page to Record Your Questions

Q#	Question	O/C	Priority	Pleased	S.
Research topic:					

1

Q#	Question	O/C	Priority	Pleased	S

Page to record questions on the **selected priority question**

Q#	Question	Pleased	Shape
Selected priority question:			

The QFT For Research, on one page

1) Identify research topic

i. Identify a field of study – a subject area
ii. List several topics covered in the subject area you identify that have piqued your interest
iii. Identify a few of the topics from above that you might consider for research
iv. Choose one topic, and write this topic at the top of a new piece of paper

2) Produce questions

✓ Follow the rules
✓ Number the questions

- Ask as many questions as you can about your research topic
- Do not stop to answer, analyze, or judge questions
- Write down every question exactly as it comes to mind
- Change any statements into questions

3) Work with questions

i. Categorize questions as Closed or Open-ended
ii. Change questions from one type to another

Closed-Ended: Answered with "yes," "no" or one word
Open-Ended: Require longer explanation

4) Rework questions

5) Prioritize and further explore

i. Choose three priority questions you are most interested in using to guide a research project.
ii. Choose one priority question that can best help you shape your research.
iii. Produce questions about your priority question.

6) Develop research questions and agenda

i. Add any new or reworked questions
ii. Identify three questions you are glad you generated through the process
iii. Identify three questions that can best help you shape your research.

7) Reflect