

Asking Good Research Questions

When you do research, you're trying to get to the heart of the matter – to think critically about information and to understand it more deeply than you do now. The quality of your research depends on the quality of the research questions you ask.

Lower Order Research Questions

Some questions are designed to help you find and understand the basic information - to get your facts straight. They help you to understand a topic more thoroughly. This type of questioning is essential for understanding the basics of your topic.

Higher Order Research Questions

Some questions help you to take apart the information you have found, explore different aspects of the problem, see varying points of view, and develop your own opinions. Exploring these critical thinking questions will take your research to the next level.

Here's How It Works

As you move down the chart, the type of questions move from lower order (basic but essential understanding) to higher order (critical thinking) questions.

	Type of Question	This type of question would use verbs like...	Example
Lower Order Questions	Knowledge: Identifying or recalling information.	Describe, identify, outline, recognize, state	What countries were allies of Britain during WWII?
	Comprehension: Organizing, selecting and understanding facts and ideas.	Explain, define, summarize	What were the main causes of WWII?
	Application: Applying known facts, rules and principles to new situations.	Compare, contrast, demonstrate	How did Hitler demonstrate the qualities of a dictator?
Higher Order Questions	Analysis: Taking information apart to understand more deeply.	Analyze, interpret, infer	Why did people follow Hitler so readily?
	Synthesis: Bringing different ideas together to create new ideas.	Create, predict, design, develop, devise, solve	What would happen if Hitler were in power today?
	Evaluation: Making judgements, forming and defending opinions.	Evaluate, defend, judge, assess, validate, critique	Was Canada justified in entering WWII?