

## What Makes a Good Research Topic?

- When you “Think Like a Researcher” you are focused on a *research question* rather than a *research topic*.
- You must also be able to *articulate the problem* that underlies the question.
- This problem must have *particular stakes*
- The solution you argue for in your position paper must be *arguable* and *feasible* based on reliable evidence.

### Examples

	<b>Issue (Broad)</b> What is the issue or overall topic that interests you?	<b>Research Question (Narrower)</b> What is a specific research question you want to investigate?	<b>Underlying Problem(s)</b> What is the problem that makes your question worth investigating? Is this an actual problem or an assumed problem?	<b>Stakes</b> Does your problem have social significance or other types of stakes (logical/ethical?)	<b>Proposal/Solution/Argument</b> What is your proposal for addressing this problem? Is your proposal <u>both</u> arguable & feasible?
1	Organic Farming	Are fruits and vegetables grown on organic farms healthier than those grown on conventional farms?	Conventional farming may produce vegetables with pesticide residues leaving individuals susceptible to preventable diseases.	Human health Environment	Consumers should choose fruits and vegetables grown organically, especially those fruits and vegetables that are most susceptible to pesticide residue.
2	Rising Cost of a College Education	Is a college education worth the investment for students in the social sciences?	Many students are emerging from 4-year degree programs with staggering student debt and no job prospects.	Debt Unemployment Value of Education	Colleges should focus on critical thinking and data analysis skills in the social sciences curriculum.
3	Law Enforcement Practices	How do local police units allocate funding and prioritize protection for all of its community members?	Less prosperous areas are not receiving the policing protection afforded to more affluent areas.	Public Safety (In)equality	Local law enforcement officials can prioritize protection for all its community members by engaging in a community policy model to address disparities.

	Issue (Broad)	Research Question (Narrower)	Underlying Problem(s)	Social Significance	Proposal/Solution/Argument
4	Campus Safety	Does under-age alcohol use contribute to a higher incidence of date rape on college campuses?	Inappropriate use of alcohol contributes to a number of social issues including date rape. Date rape causes severe emotional distress, jeopardizing personal and professional goals.	Public Health (Mental & Emotional) Public Safety	UC Merced students under the age of 21 should be automatically expelled if caught drinking on campus.
5	Violence in the Media	Do violent video games contribute to school shootings and other mass murders?	School shootings and mass murders cause great pain and suffering to victims and families.	Crime Prevention Gun Control	ESRB age limits for Mature and Adults Only games should be moved from 17 and 18 respectively to 21.
6	Violence in the Media	How do first-person shooter games affect the psychology of their players?	First-person shooter games reduce players' level of self-control and empathy which increases criminal violence.	Mental Health Public Safety	The Entertainment Software Rating Board should encourage game developers to create and rate games at levels that are appropriate for anticipated players' age and psychological development.