I-Cap Student Research Project

Tips To Define Your Research Question

Identify Your Area of Interest

Start by selecting a broad topic that genuinely interests you. Your enthusiasm for the subject will keep you motivated throughout the research process.

- *Example: If you are interested in climate change, you might start with a broad topic like "climate change impacts."*

TIP 1

Conduct Preliminary Research

Before narrowing down your question, do some initial reading to understand the existing literature, key debates, and gaps in knowledge within your area of interest.

- *Example: After initial reading, you might find that there is limited research on the impact of climate change on urban heat islands.*

TIP 2

Be Specific

A good research question should be specific and focused. Avoid broad or vague questions that are too difficult to address within the scope of an undergraduate project.

- *Example: Narrow your question to "How does climate change affect the frequency and intensity of urban heat islands in New York City?"*

TIP 3

Ensure Feasibility

Consider the resources available to you, including time, access to data, and any necessary equipment. Make sure your question can be realistically answered within these constraints.

- *Example: Ensure you have access to temperature data for New York City and the tools necessary to analyze it.*

TIP 4

Define Key Terms

Clarify any ambiguous terms or concepts in your question to ensure that it is clear and understandable. This will also help you stay focused during your research.

- *Example: Clearly define what you mean by "urban heat islands" and "intensity."*

TIP 5

Formulate Open-Ended Questions

Aim for open-ended questions that promote exploration and discussion rather than yes/no answers. This encourages a more comprehensive analysis.

- *Example: Instead of asking "Do urban heat islands exist in New York City?", ask "What are the contributing factors to the formation of urban heat islands in New York City?"*

TIP 6

Align with Research Objectives

Make sure your question aligns with your research objectives and goals. It should guide your study and help you achieve specific outcomes.

- *Example: If your objective is to explore mitigation strategies, your question might be "What are effective mitigation strategies for reducing urban heat islands in New York City?"*

TIP 7

Seek Feedback

Discuss your research question with peers and your supervisor. Their input can help refine your question and ensure it is academically rigorous.

- *Example: Present your question to your professor and peers for feedback.*

TIP 8

Consider the Scope:

Ensure your question is appropriately scoped for an undergraduate project. It should be challenging but not too complex or extensive.

- *Example: Ensure your question is not too broad, such as "How does climate change affect the entire United States?"*

TIP 9

Reflect on the 'So What?' Factor

Your research question should address a gap in knowledge or have practical significance. Ask yourself why this question matters and what contribution your research will make to the field.

- *Example: Your question should address why it's important to study urban heat islands in New York City.*

TIP 10