

Research Papers: Important Questions to Ask Yourself Before and After Your First Draft

Before:

- What topics have you chosen for your research and why?
- What do you know now about the topic
- What do you want to find out?
- Are you aware of any controversies regarding this topic? If so, what are they, and what is your current stand on the issue?
- Have you noticed any areas of disagreement among your sources?
- Did anything surprise you as you gathered information?
- What has been the most interesting aspect of the material you've gathered so far?
- After reviewing your data or sources, what do you see as the latest problems in the field of your topic?
- What do you think are the important facts of the matter?
- What new insight can you contribute?
- Considering all of the previous questions, how would you sum up your current attitude toward your topic in a sentence or two?
- If you decide to use the answer to the previous question as a working thesis for your paper, what information will you have to give your readers to convince them that your stand is a valid one? What questions of theirs will you have to answer? (The answers to these questions will suggest major points for your outline.)
- What one real question will your paper answer?
- What is your current answer to this question?
- What information do you have to support this?
- What information do you still need to gather?

After:

- Are the introduction, thesis, and conclusion clear and logical? Does the conclusion relate to the introduction?
- Are ideas and paragraphs smoothly and sufficiently developed, or would more data or examples help?
- Do any terms or concepts need explanation to a lay reader?
- Do any ideas or references seem irrelevant?
- Does the paper make claims for which there is insufficient evidence?
- Does any evidence seem unsound?
- Are potential counterarguments explored and supported without bias?
- Are differing points of view sufficiently acknowledged, explained, and integrated?
- Is bias present in words themselves, e.g. "genetically modified foods"?
- Does the bibliography contain a sufficient number and range of sources?
- Are all listed sources used in the paper?
- Do citations appear correct? Are they formatted in a consistent manner? Would you be able to locate the source from the given information?