

From an interest to a research question

Original study guide — general learning resource.

1. Describe the problem

Write two sentences about the topic, who it affects and why it matters. Separate what you already know from assumptions you need to investigate.

2. Narrow the question

Choose a clear population, context and focus. Ask whether the question can be answered with the time, resources and access available.

3. Map the literature

List keywords and related terms. Record each source, its research question, method, findings and limitations. Compare views rather than collecting quotations alone.

4. Plan responsibly

Discuss methods, consent, privacy and any required ethics review with a qualified supervisor before collecting information from people.

5. Make the next step small

Prepare a one-page proposal: question, rationale, key literature, possible method and main uncertainties. Use the next conversation to improve the question.