

All About Writing Essential Questions

An essential question is any question requiring one of the following thought processes:

- a question which requires you to develop a plan or course of action.
- a question that requires you to make a decision.

The essential question directs the course of your research. As such, **essential questions are powerful and directive, and they will help you commit to the process of critical thinking through inquiry.** Ultimately, the **answer to the essential question** will require that you **craft a response that involves knowledge construction.** This **new knowledge building** occurs **through the integration of discrete pieces of information** obtained during the research process.

Answers to essential questions are a direct measure of your understanding of your research.

From Point A to B: Avoiding the Simple Question

Writing questions such as "How did penicillin help people in America in the 1920s?" simply asks you to move information from one point (the resource) to another (their paper). This often leads to plagiarism.

An essential question guides your research. Essential questions promote deep and enduring understanding. If you organize your project around a well-constructed essential question, your project will be successful.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when developing an essential question.

What is NOT an essential question?

1. It is NOT a question that can be answered with a yes or no.
2. It is NOT a question that can be answered in one sentence.
3. It is NOT a blurry or large question that requires a five-pound book to answer.

An essential question IS:

1. It IS a question that guides your research.
2. It IS a question that will give your research a frame and a focus.
3. It IS clear and concise—or short and sweet.
4. It IS a question that tells your audience what your project will address.
5. It IS a question that has no single “right” answer.

How do I write an essential question?

1. Use the key words: how, what impact, what effect/affect, why, if, and the like.
2. Use words that make sense to you.
3. Remember that you might need to change your essential question when it doesn't make sense.

From:

<https://www.robeson.k12.nc.us/cms/lib/NC01000307/Centricity/Domain/3916/Writing%20Essential%20Questions.pdf>