

Creating a Research Agenda

APSU Writing Center Handout

A research agenda outlines the **research question** and the **methods** you will use to investigate it, including data collection and analysis strategies.

Research Questions

A research question captures the **primary aim or objective** of a study. Sometimes the research question is stated directly.

- **Example:** How do students develop collaborative skills in online learning environments?

Not all research questions appear as direct questions. They may be embedded in a **hypothesis, aim, or thesis statement**.

- **Hypothesis style:** This study tests whether daily mindfulness exercises reduce stress levels among college students.
- **Aim-oriented style:** The goal of this research is to explore the impact of urban community gardens on neighborhood social cohesion.
- **Thesis-style:** To examine how workplace flexibility influences employee satisfaction.

Many research questions are **implicit**, woven into a larger research agenda. Active reading is essential to identify these components, as you may need to piece together the question, objectives, and methods from the text.

Identifying a Research Agenda

Use the next section as a guide when reviewing an article of research to cite in your paper.

Remember that not all texts may have each:

Where in the document did you find the item below and how was it communicated? What did the author include?

- **Research Question**
- **Statement of Purpose**
- **Statement of Problem**
- **Hypothesis**
- **Other Articulations of the Research Agenda**

Targeted Reading Strategies

Use these questions to guide your reading and identify the research agenda in articles or papers:

- What is the aim or primary objective of the paper?
- What results does the paper plan to report on?
- What is the main purpose of the experiment?
- What is the study designed to evaluate?
- What models might the work explore?
- What interactions might the paper report?
- What kind of investigations were conducted or tested?

Generating your own Research Agenda

Brainstorm your research topic by answering these questions:

- What is the topic?
- Why does it matter?
- What is one research question you could further investigate about this topic?

Example Research Agenda

Topic: Effects of interacting with cats on human mood

Research Question: How does spending time with cats influence stress and happiness levels in college students?

Hypothesis: Interacting with cats for 10 minutes daily will reduce stress and increase self-reported happiness.

Methods:

- **Participants:** 50 college students
- **Data Collection:** Daily mood surveys and stress questionnaires, time spent petting or playing with cats recorded
- **Analysis:** Compare mood and stress levels before and after cat interactions, use paired t-tests to assess changes

Reference

Purdue Online Writing Lab. (2025, Fall). *Articulating a research agenda* [PDF]. Purdue University. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/graduate_writing/introduction_to_writing/documents/getting-started-with-grad-writing/articulating-a-research-agenda.pdf