Create a Research Hypothesis

A research hypothesis is a potential answer to a research question. You formulate a hypothesis based on initial research, and then refine your hypothesis based on further research. Finally, you test your hypothesis to find out whether your ideas can be supported by evidence.

1. **Choose a research question.** Make a list of topics that interest you and begin thinking of a few questions related to those topics that you could answer by finding more information and sources. A research hypothesis is a potential answer to a research question. For example, if you are interested in political elections, your research question might be the following: "How do candidates win presidential elections?"

2. **Read articles and information related to your research question** to gain more specific background knowledge of the subject. This research will help you narrow your topic and research question to something more specific. For example, you might narrow your question to "How do candidates use social media to win elections?"

3. **Draft your hypothesis.** As you continue to read, you will find disagreements among the various sources of information you may you come across. You may then start to think of an explanation for these disagreements. These explanations become good potential research hypotheses. Often, a hypothesis is written using an if-then format that shows the relationship between two different variables. For example, "If positive use of social media helps candidates win political elections, then candidates who do a good job of using social networking tools have a higher likelihood of winning their elections."

4. **Be specific.** Once you have generated some ideas, ask yourself the following questions: Will I be able to find sources to support this claim? Are the ideas clearly defined? Is the hypothesis very general or very specific? Note that a specific hypothesis is easier to support with evidence, making your argument stronger.