

What Do You Want To Know?

One of the first steps of research writing is to identify a topic that interests you and then formulate open-ended research questions. For example, if you want to find out more about the machine in the photograph on page 222 of your textbook, you would first decide what you want to know about them.

Try It! Take a few minutes to list some things you might want to know about this machine. Consider these questions as you participate in an extended discussion with your class. Take turns expressing your ideas.

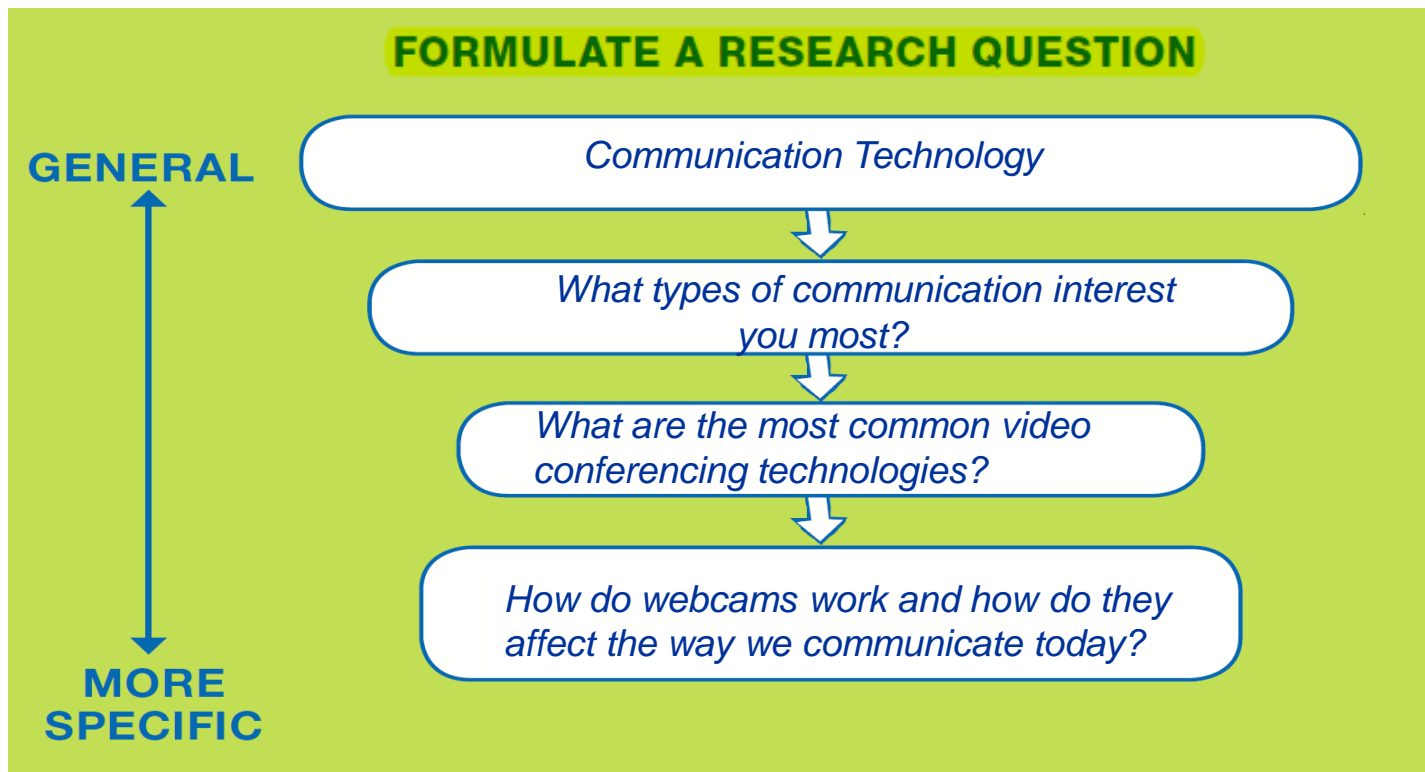
- What could I ask about the machine and the industry in which it is used?
- What could I ask about related careers?
- What could I ask about safety or innovation?
- What else might I want to learn about this machine?

Prewriting

Choose and Formulate Your Research Question

A broad, general topic is almost impossible to research well and cover thoroughly. Plan to do some preliminary research in order to narrow your topic and then formulate your research question.

Apply It! Use a graphic organizer like this one to narrow your topic. Write your general topic in the top box, and keep narrowing your topic with research questions as you move down the chart. Your last box should hold your narrowest or “smallest” research question. This will be the focus of your informational research report.



Prewriting

Make a Research Plan

Once you have written your major research question, you are ready to make a research plan. As part of your plan, you will create a timeline for finishing your report. You also will find and evaluate sources of information.

Print Resources

- Find print resources in libraries and bookstores.

Electronic Resources

- Find authoritative, reliable electronic resources using search engines on the Internet.

Interviews With Experts

- Ask questions of an expert on your topic, record the interview, and take good notes.

Multimedia Resources

- Watch movies about your topic, and listen to relevant podcasts or seminars.

The Organization of an Informational Research Report

I. Introduction

Introduce Your Thesis Statement

- Attention-grabbing introduction
- Clear thesis statement

II. Body

Support Your Thesis Statement

- Synthesis of information from multiple sources presented as a logical progression of ideas
- Evidence that supports the thesis statement
- Graphics and illustrations to explain concepts

III. Conclusion

Add a Final Thought

- Summary of findings and final conclusions
- Memorable ending with a final thought or conclusion

Revising: Making It Better

Now that you have finished your first draft, you are ready to revise. You can use the guide below for making changes to improve your draft. Remember—you can use the steps in any order.

Replace . . .

- Words that are not specific
- Words that are overused
- Sentences that are unclear

Add . . .

- New information
- Descriptive adjectives and adverbs
- Rhetorical or literary devices

Delete . . .

- Unrelated ideas
- Sentences that sound good, but do not make sense
- Repeated words or phrases
- Unnecessary details

Reorder . . .

- So most important points are last
- To make better sense or to flow better
- So details support main ideas

Fine-Tune Your Draft

Apply It! Use the revision suggestions to prepare your final draft. Make sure you keep your audience and purpose in mind as you focus on choosing words to express exactly what you mean.

- **Focus on Subtlety of Meaning** Focus on the key words that communicate essential information related to your topic. To avoid repeating the same vocabulary, choose the word that best fits the context and expresses the idea most precisely.
- **Define Terms** Clearly define terms and explain concepts that will be unfamiliar to your audience. If you add a quotation in order to provide a definition, be sure to document your source properly.
- **Improve Sentence Variety** Add, delete, or combine sentences to keep your writing engaging and interesting.

Making It Correct

Before editing your final draft, think about how you will **paraphrase**, **summarize**, **quote**, and **accurately cite** all researched information. Look at these lines from "Solar Eclipses: Why They Occur and What They Teach Us":

What techniques has the writer used to help integrate the quotation?

Solar eclipses occur only when the new moon lines up exactly with the sun and Earth, blocking our view of the sun. According to physicist Paul Doherty, solar eclipses don't happen every month because "the orbit of the moon is actually tilted a little bit so that most of the time the moon passes above the sun or below the sun" (*QUEST: Eclipse Chasers*).

- Part of the introductory phrase identifies the author or speaker of the quotation.
- The writer prepares the reader for the information in the quotation by using **an introductory phrase**.
- The writer used quotation marks at the beginning and at the end of the quotation.
- The writer has properly cited the source, using correct format and punctuation.

Grammar Mini-Lesson: Punctuation

Punctuating Quotations With Citations Quotations follow specific rules for punctuation. For example, parenthetical citations occur after the quotation but before the period.

Try It! Determine whether these quotations are punctuated properly and have correct citation formatting. Correct the punctuation where necessary.

1. In a speech, the astronomer Saji Patel stated, “We have a greater ability to study space today because of the Hubble, one of many technological advances in telescopes (Patel 2009).”
2. During a solar eclipse, a tourist was overheard asking, Why is it getting dark in the middle of the day?”

Publishing

Publish Your Piece

When you' ve finished your final draft, publish it. Use this chart to identify a way to publish your informational research report for the appropriate audience.

If your audience is...	...then publish it by...
Students or adults at school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Displaying your written report in the school library or media center• Presenting your research at an assembly or to another English class
A local group or club with a special interest in your topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presenting an oral or multimedia report at a club meeting; answering questions about your research• Posting your report online and inviting comments