

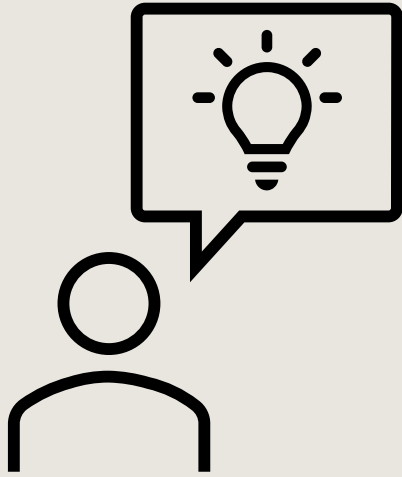
"STEPPING UP YOUR SCHOLARLY SKILLS: DEVELOPING AND REFINING RESEARCH QUESTIONS"

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AGENDA

- **Strong research questions**
- **Selecting topic**
 - Concept mapping
 - 5 W's
 - Use of library resources and databases
- **Common pitfalls**
 - Scope too broad or narrow
- **Practice Questions**
- **Activity** – developing a research question
 - <https://padlet.com/sh3675/DevelopingAndRefiningResearchQuestions>

A STRONG RESEARCH QUESTION SHOULD BE:



- Based on curiosity and interest, as well as persistent work and investigation
- Relevant to the field of study, in structure and content
- Specific to an issue, but broad enough for inquiry and exploration of the topic
- Without a preconceived (yes or no) answer
- In most cases, having the ability to articulate the problem that underlies the question at hand

RESEARCH PROJECT

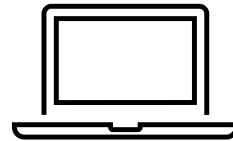
**Project
assigned**



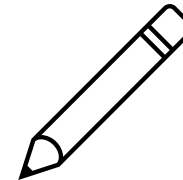
**Pick a
Topic**



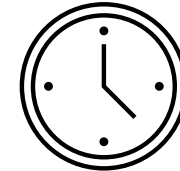
**Read
and find
sources**



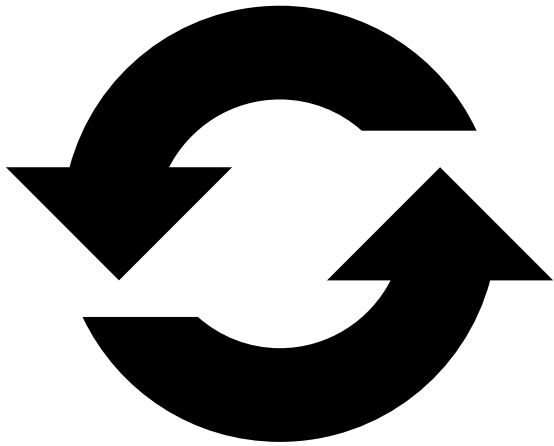
**Write
and
edit**



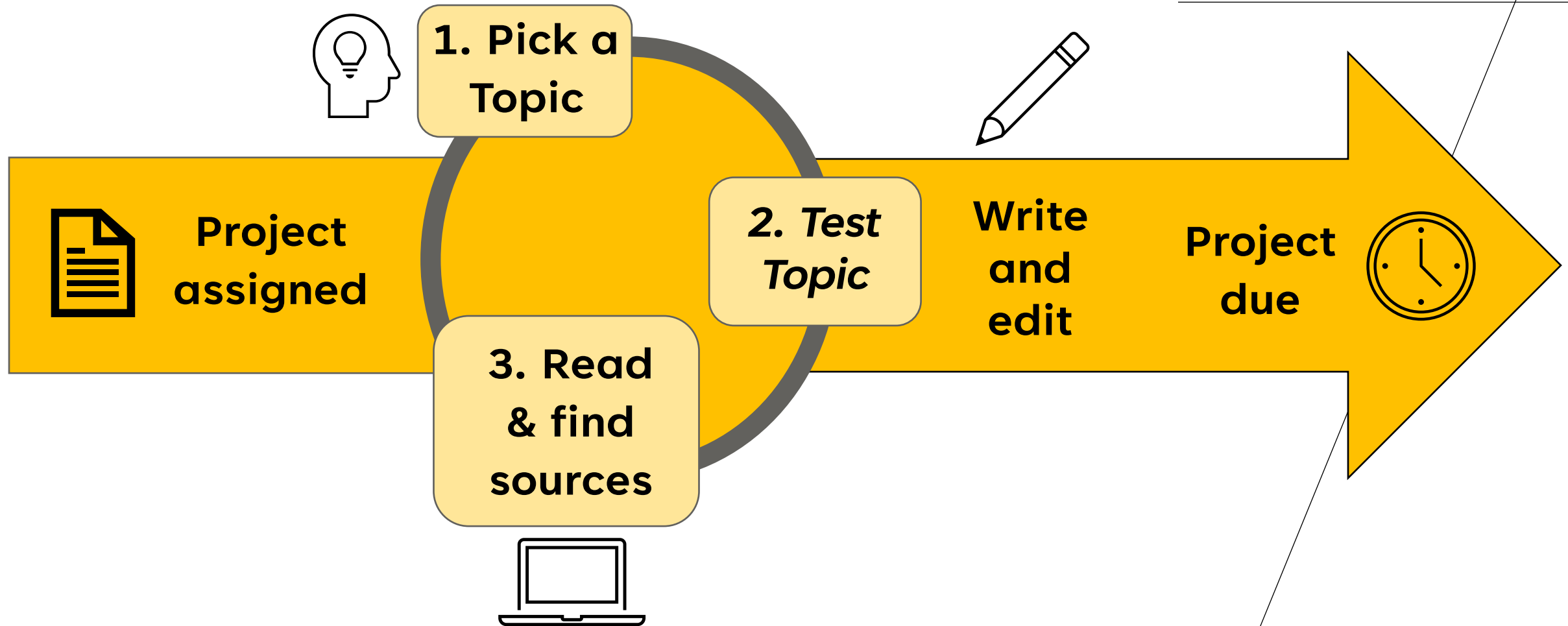
**Project
due**



AN ITERATIVE PROCESS



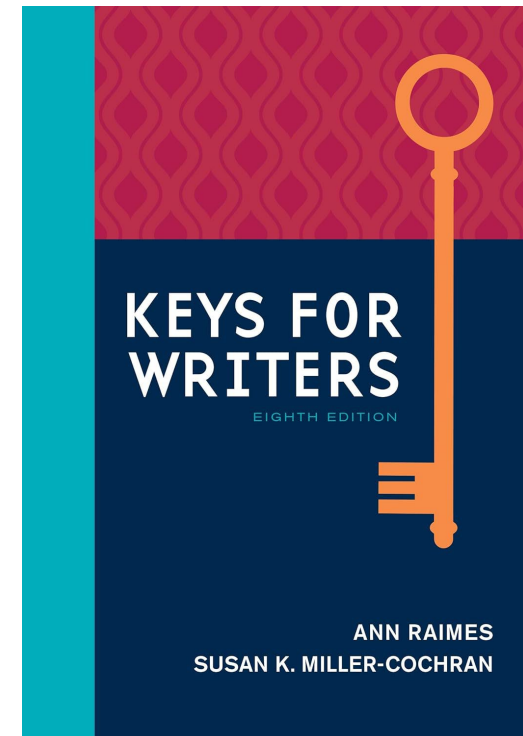
- Research isn't a one-way street.
- Just because you start looking into a topic doesn't mean it will be a linear process. It won't be.
- Your initial topic is just an idea. You test with exploratory research and if it looks promising then you will look for more resources.
- You may find the published research leads you away from original topic. Let the research you find guide you and tweak topic.
- You will go through this cycle a few times. You may find yourself with enough resources to start writing the paper.



KEYS FOR WRITERS

Raimes and Miller-Cochran includes a section to guide in the formation of a research topic. The authors advise to avoid the following since they are not debatable.

- "a neutral statement"
- "an announcement of the paper's broad subject"
- "a fact, which is not arguable"
- "a truism (statement that is obviously true)"
- "an opinion based only on your feelings"
- "a sweeping generalization"



“HOW IS TECHNOLOGY AFFECTING US?”

Technology?	Affecting what?	Us?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• cell phones• laptops• texting• online dating• social media• Google• Wikipedia• Facebook• Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• how we communicate• bullying• romantic relationships• how students do research• how young people develop their independence• how we learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• adults• adolescents• teenagers• children• college students• high school students

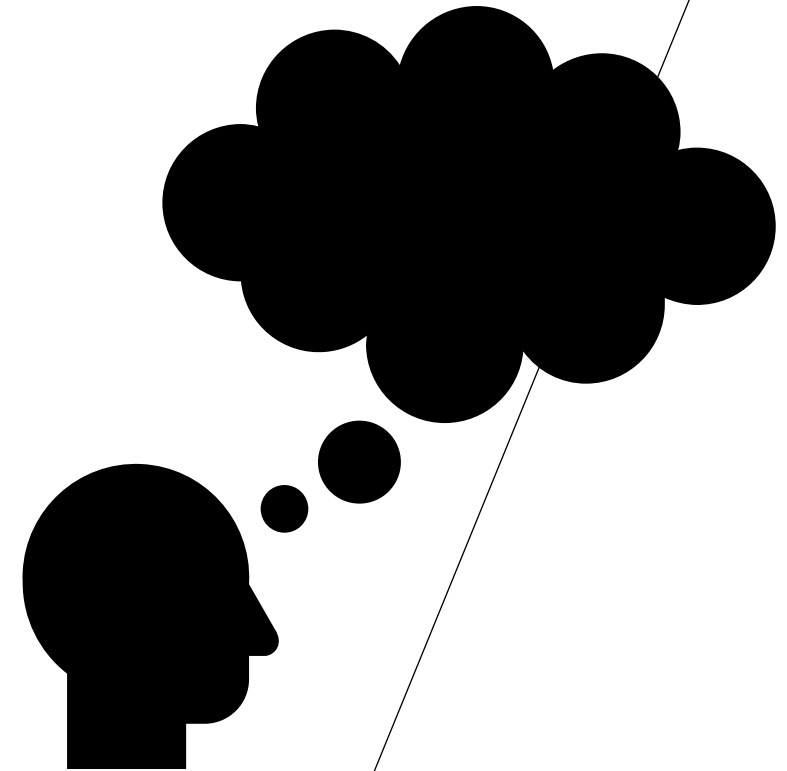
Make new combinations which are narrower, more specific questions.

- How are cell phones affecting teenager's development of independence from their parents?
- How are laptops in the classroom affecting how high school students learn?
- How has texting affected teenagers' romantic relationships?
- How has Google affected how college students do academic research?
- How has social media affected bullying among adolescents?

CHOOSING A TOPIC

There are several things to think about when selecting a topic:

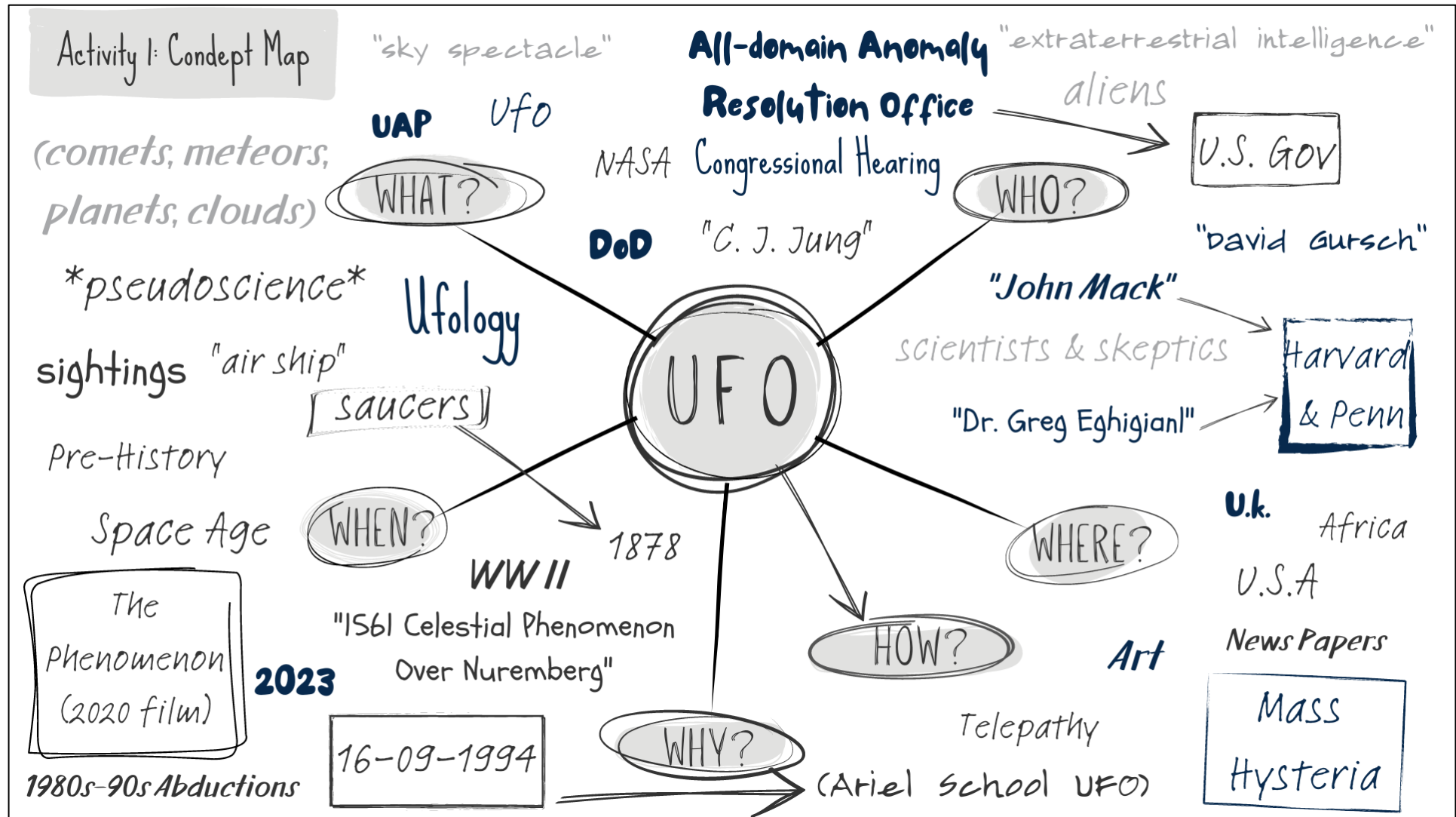
- Have you been assigned a topic or are you free to choose a topic?
- How many words or pages do you need to write (or how long does a presentation have to be)?
- Do you need to include specific types of sources in your citations?
- If you can select your own topic, what are you passionate about or most interested in from the class?
- By asking a research question, you are keeping an open mind about what the research may reveal.



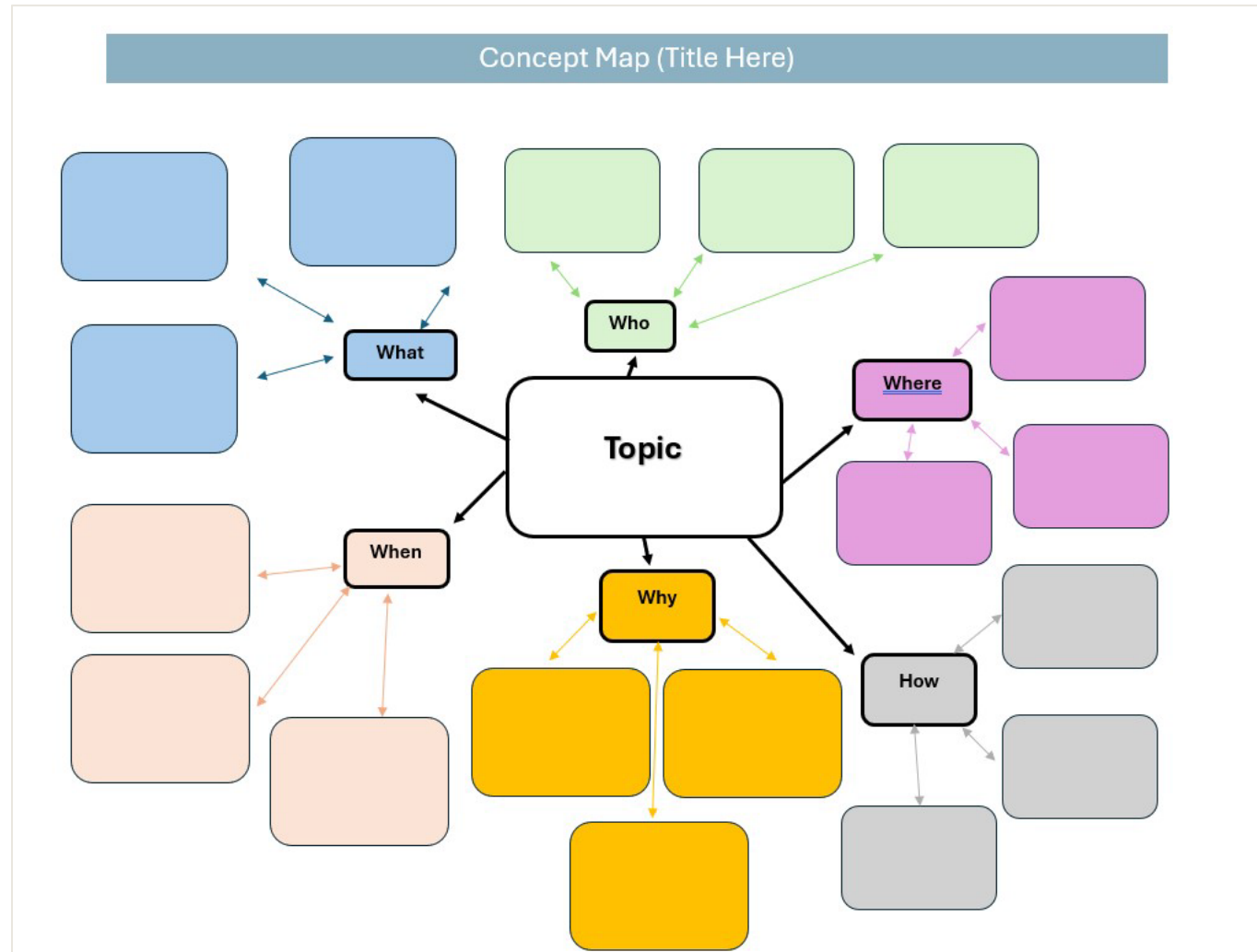
STILL NEED IDEAS?

- Scan textbook for broad topics
- Review course readings or class notes
- Do pre research online using general searches in Google, Duck Duck Go, Wikipedia, etc.
- Utilize Drexel Libraries resources including:
 - [Dragon Search](#) (Library homepage search engine)
 - [Gale General OneFile](#) (Topic finder)
 - [Gale in Context: Opposing Viewpoints](#) (Timely issues of interest)

CONCEPT MAPPING



CONCEPT MAPPING



Too Broad

- How is malaria treated?
- Will tablet computing replace the need for laptops?

Too Narrow

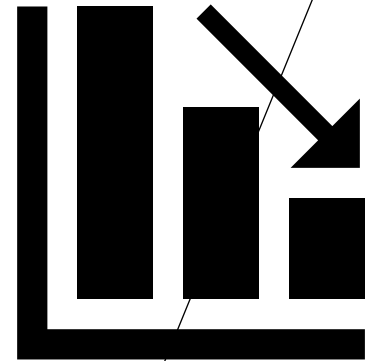
- How much has the popularity of Harry Potter improved the reading scores of second graders in Missouri?
- At what point in time will the need for nurses in pediatric wards outpace the graduation rates from nursing schools?

Just right

- In what ways have online communities changed the nature of support systems available for people with Attention Deficit Disorder?
- How has mountaintop removal mining in western Kentucky impacted the migratory habits of the local bird population?

TOO FEW RESULTS?

- Too narrow in scope
- It is an emerging topic
 - Common problem in nursing, medicine and public health
 - Shows a gap in the literature
- Time frame doesn't yield enough supporting literature
- Geographic area specific
- Could be looking in the wrong places for information
 - Try focused subject specific databases and resources



EXPAND TOPIC

- Exploring related topics or products.
- Comparing or contrasting your topic with another topic
- Choosing an alternative topic that isn't as recent.
- Consider the time period your topic is covering.
- Look at a larger sample population.
- Expand the geographic area being discussed.

TOO BROAD? TRY THE 5 W'S

Who?

- Population? Age group?

What?

- Subject area or discipline?

Where?

- Where do you want to focus geographically? City? Institution?

When?

- What time period are you wanting topic to cover? Historical? Or current event?

Why?

- Why is topic important to you? Society at large?

You don't need to answer all questions, but using one or two of the W's will help refine and focus the question.

WHO	WHAT	WHERE	WHEN	WHY
				
What population or group do you want to look at? Is there an age group to focus on?	What is the subject area or discipline? Does it meet your assignment requirements?	What geographic location do you want to focus on? This can be a city, state, country...	What time period are you wanting to cover with your research? Is it historical or current?	Why is the topic important? To you? To your course of study? To society as a whole?
Examples: College students, seniors, children, teens	Examples: Terrorism, Agriculture, US Civil War, Gun Control	Examples: Chicago, California, Great Britain, North America	Examples: 2000 - present, 1776 - 1780, Overview of 1800 - today	Examples: Personal experience, major theory, current event

What Makes a Good Research Topic?

- When you “Think Like a Researcher” you are focused on a research **question** rather than a research **topic**.
- You must also be able to **articulate the problem** that underlies the question.

Topic of interest or problem?	5 Ws	Narrower question?	Social significance or subject areas?	Open ended? Neutral?	Find and read sources. List resources	Too narrow or broad? Repeat process on next line
Cellphones and distracted driving in teenagers	Teenagers Traffic accidents Distracted Driving Texting & driving Cellphone addiction United States Public Safety	How does cellphone addiction in teenagers contribute to traffic accidents and increase safety risks to the community and the drivers?	Public safety Public Health Prevention and Control Technology Young adults	Yes	Found articles and statistics via library databases	

Developing & Refining Research Questions

Are you looking for answers? Your research becomes much easier when you know the question. **Start by writing out your topic as a question.**

You can write out your question many times from different perspectives before you can settle on what it is you want to research.

Having trouble forming your topic into a question? Fill in the blanks of the following sentence to help you discover your question:

A) I am studying ...

B) ... in order to find out (*think of the 5 Ws*) ...

C) ...in order to help my reader understand ...

D) Research Question:

YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION ...

1) Is not easily answered with a simple yes or no.	<i>It has some substance and requires explanation.</i>
2) Has an underlying problem with social significance (local, national or international).	<i>It is important to someone other than just you.</i>
3) Poses a genuine question and aims for neutrality.	<i>It avoids using loaded language or suggesting a pre-determined answer.</i>
4) Can be answered with reliable evidence.	<i>It is re-searchable. Others have already been contributing to this conversation.</i>
5) Has appropriate scope.	<i>It is not too narrow, nor too broad; it does not leave you with too much or too little information.</i>

Testing some research questions



Research Question A: Are there health risks for teens who only eat convenience foods (fast food)?

Research Question B: Do genetically modified foods endanger the health of those who consume them?

Research Question C: Should aluminum bats be banned from high school baseball and teen leagues?

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