

Planing your project

- From topics to questions -

based on “The Craft of Research”

by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams

Short project proposals based on “How to take apart a melted down reactor” cartoon

- Present the assigned problems
- List and explain technical vocabulary used
- Propose a project steps necessary to achieve goals
- Be prepared to ask questions and finally comment on other than your proposals

A checklist for understanding your “audience”

1. Who will listen or evaluate your research proposal:

- Professionals who expect me to follow every academic convention and use a standard format?
- Well-informed general readers?
- General readers who know little about the topic?

2. What do they expect me to do?

- Should I entertain them?
- Provide new factual knowledge?
- Help them understand something better?
- Help them do something to solve a practical problem in the world?

A checklist for understanding your “audience”

3. How much can I expect them to know already?

- What do they know about my topic?
- Is the problem one that they already recognize?
- Is it one that they have but haven't yet recognized?
- Is the problem not theirs, but only mine?
- Will they take the problem seriously, or must I convince them that it matters?

4. How will your audience respond to the solution/answer in my main claim?

- Will it contradict what they already believe?
- How will they make standard arguments against my solution?
- Will they want to see the steps that led me to the solution?

To summarize: Your aim is to explain

1. What is your project about?
 - *I am working on the topic of...*
2. What you don't know about it?
 - *Because I want to find out...*
3. Why you want your audience to know and care about it?
 - *In order to help my reader understand better...*

From Questions to a Problem

You can identify the significance of your research question by fleshing out this three-step formula:

1. **Topic:** I am studying
2. **Question:** because I want to find out what/why/
how
3. **Significance:** in order to help my audience
understand

A pure research example, because step 3 refers only to understanding

1. **Topic:** I am studying the electromagnetic radiation in a section of the universe
2. **Question:** because I want to find out how many stars are in the sky
3. **Significance:** in order to help my audience to understand whether the universe will expand forever or collapse into a new big bang.

An applied problem because only when astronomers know how to account for atmospheric distortion can they do what they want to-measure light more accurately

1. **Topic:** I am studying how readings from the Hubble telescope differ from readings for the same stars measured by earthbound telescopes
2. **Question:** because I want to find out how much the atmosphere distorts measurements of electromagnetic radiation
3. **Practical Significance:** so that astronomers can use data from earthbound telescopes to measure more accurately the density of electromagnetic radiation.

- *“Nothing discourages a teacher more than a student who does exactly what is suggested and no more.”*
- *“Teachers want you to use their suggestions to start your thinking, not end it.”*
- *“Nothing makes a teacher happier than when you use her/his suggestions to find something she/he never expected.”*
- Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*, Third Edition (p. 63). Kindle Edition.

More details project proposals based assigned reading materials

- Present the assigned project proposals using “three-steps formula” of
 - ✓ a topic
 - ✓ a question
 - ✓ a significance
- List and explain technical vocabulary used
- Be prepared to ask questions and finally comment on other than your proposals