



Acknowledgments

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YRN TOOLKIT

Stage 1:

Deciding on your topic for the research project



What is deciding on your research topic about?

The very first stage of a project is knowing what topic you are going to research.

You do not need to be very specific about it at this stage, as later stages will help you narrow it down.

Why do you decide on a research topic?

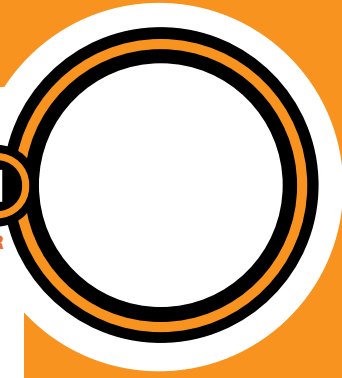
It is important that you chose the right topic for your research for a number of reasons.

- Motivation: you may be working on your research for quite a long time, so the subject will need to be one that interests you.
- Relevance: it should have meaning for you or your group, so you can act on the findings.

For example, one group in the Young Researcher Network is researching leisure activities at the residential college they attend. They are all motivated and interested because they live there and want things to do after school hours, and can use their findings to persuade the college to put on extra activities.

How do you decide on a research topic?

There are a number of ways that you might identify the topic. In some cases it will present itself to you without you having to do any work.



a) This could be because you or your group has a strong identity. There are plenty of types of self-or group-identity that can be the starting point for a research project.

This might be around

- a shared interest or hobby;
- all of you living in the same area; or
- a shared sexuality, ethnicity, religion or similar.

If this is the case for you, could this be the topic for your project?

b) Another reason that a research topic presents itself is that it may be that your group has formed to meet a need, or take action on a problem facing you. For example:

- a youth group that formed because there was nothing for young people to do in the area;
- a campaign group that formed to raise awareness of poor transport for young people; or
- a volunteer group seeking to improve their local community in some way.

If this is the case, then it is likely that doing some research that provides evidence for your campaign or action plan would be useful.

c) It may be that your group is already aware, through just experiencing it, or as a result of a consultation, of the issues that young people are concerned about but adults don't seem to pay attention to.

d) You might have been asked by others to carry out research on a topic.



STAGE 1



If none of these apply to you, try holding a small discussion session in your group. The resource sheet with the list of questions may help you.

If you are finding it really hard to come up with a topic that you want to research, it may be that this is not the right time for you to carry out a research project as you may find it hard to find one that is relevant and interesting enough to motivate you.

Top Tips:

- Take your time choosing the right topic.
- Choose a topic that you care about.
- Don't worry if it's not obvious exactly what you will research – the next stages will help you decide.