



Developing a Hypothesis or Research Question

Guide

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Introduction

You've picked your topic. Now you need to decide what to do with it. What will be your focus, your focal point? First you must determine what type of paper you are writing. (Or maybe your instructor has decided for you.) Are you writing?

- an analytical, investigative paper or
- an argumentative, persuasive paper.?

The type of paper you are writing will affect the purpose and structure of your paper. It's easy to leap into the research process, without establishing your direction and limitations. Let's set the guidelines first, and save time in the long run.

Approaches to Hypothesis Development

The Analytical approach:

Analytical papers take the approach of collecting data or information on a topic or concept in order to study and understand it, and then try to make some sense of the data or information.

Analytical papers use the **inductive method**, building up from the particulars of the evidence to analyze the parts of the whole, and then arriving at a conclusion about the evidence.

Inductive Method:

- Moves from the specific details to the general statement(s) from
 1. Observation of data (reading)
 2. Analysis
 3. Critical Thinking
 4. Conclusions
 5. Explanation
- May find evidence not present in the research question because the paper explores a range of options
- Is inquisitive and may not reach a definitive closure on the issue

The analytical approach calls for research on a topic about which you have made no conclusions, and for a **research question**.

Example of a research question:

"Should motorcycle riders be required, by law, to wear helmets?"

HINT: It's always a question.

The Argumentative Approach

Argumentative papers take a persuasive approach. The hypothesis is developed, and then data and information are gathered to buttress or support the thesis.

Argumentative papers use the **deductive method**, that is, the hypothesis directs the data collection or literature review. Data are analyzed in the context of the point to be made.

Deductive Method:

- Moves from the general statement of belief to specific evidence supporting that belief(s)
 1. Hypothesis
 2. Data collection to support the hypothesis
 3. Analysis of data with interpretation intended to support you position
 4. Arguments tied to evidences to support the thesis
 5. Convincing conclusion using evidence to support a stance on a debatable issue
- Searches (and researches) for evidence only to logically buttress the argument
- Sustains the argument throughout the paper
- Convinces and reaches definite closure on the issue

The argument is the thesis or the hypothesis.

Example of a hypothesis statement.

"Motorcycle riders should not be required, by law, to wear helmets."

HINT: It's always a statement.