



CREATING A RESEARCH QUESTION

WHY DEVELOP A RESEARCH QUESTION?



It's important to develop a research question to:



Establish a direction for your research paper



Determine a focused area to research



Fit your ideas and discussion within the limitations of the assignment

WRITING FOR YOURSELF

There are only 3 reasons to write for your reader, but there are many reasons to write for yourself.



Reasons to write for your reader:

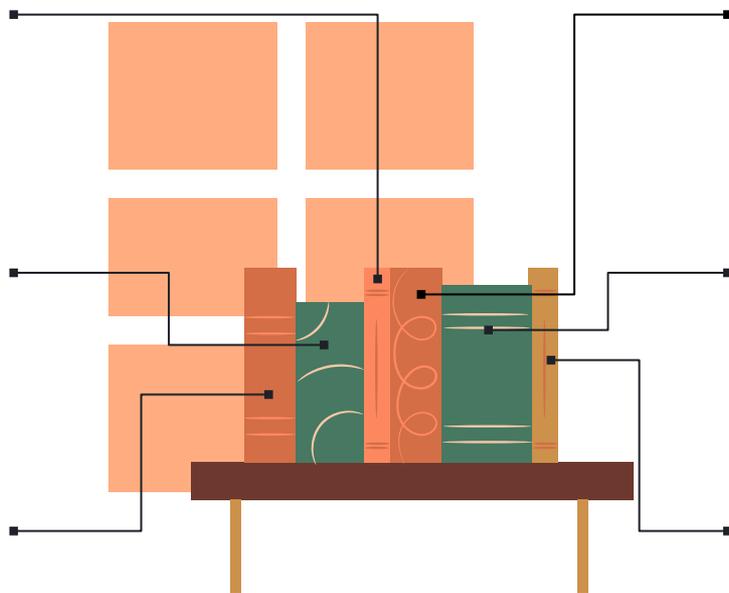
- to inform
- to entertain
- to persuade

REASONS TO WRITE FOR YOURSELF

TO REMEMBER AND
REFLECT

TO UNDERSTAND OR
INVESTIGATE

TO EXPRESS YOURSELF



TO GET ORGANIZED

TO CREATE

TO HEAL

DECIDE WHY YOU WANT TO WRITE FOR YOURSELF

After thinking about this, picking a research topic will be much easier.

Getting Started:

In order to get started on picking your topic, make a list of things you are interested in that you want to understand or investigate. Include things that you love, that you hate, or things that you are fascinated by.

Pro tip:

Pick something that you have an emotional response to if you're worried about running out of things to say or losing interest.



DECIDE ON A TOPIC THAT PEAKS YOUR INTEREST

You may already be familiar with it, or it might be something you're curious to know more about. You're going to write a paper that explores this topic, so it's important for you to write about something that holds your attention.

Your topic can start out broad. In the next slide we'll take a look at how to brainstorm ideas.

STEP #1: BRAINSTORMING

There are 3 great ways to brainstorm.
Practice them and decide which one works
for you.

1. Make a list.
2. Make a clustermap.
3. Do a free write.

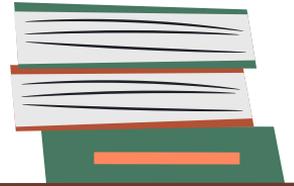
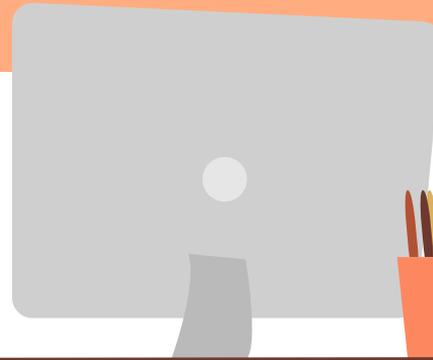
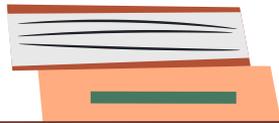
BRAINSTORMING OPTION #1: LIST MAKING

01.
TIME

02.
MEMORY

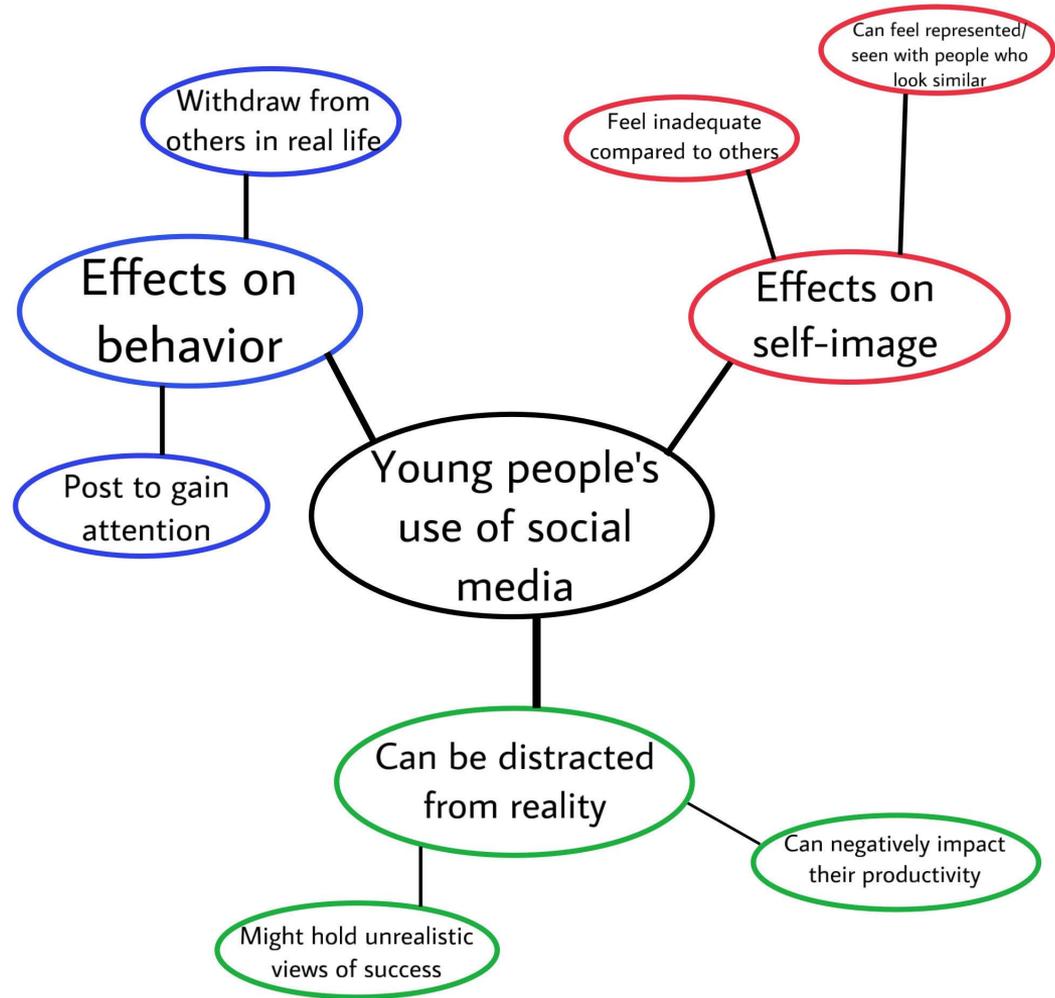
03.
MAGIC

04.
FEAR



BRAINSTORMING OPTION #2: MAKE A CLUSTER MAP

- If you're beginning with this step, start by writing "My interests" in the center and then branch out any ideas you have.
- In this example, similar ideas are grouped together to help organize thoughts.



BRAINSTORMING OPTION #3: DO A FREE WRITE

Take 10 minutes and write anything that comes to mind about your interests. Don't worry about grammar or punctuation. Don't worry about it making sense to your reader. Think of it like a journal entry and just jot down any thoughts or feelings you have.

STEP 2: WORKING WITH A BROAD TOPIC

Your idea may start out broad. This is ok because you will ask yourself any of the following **questions** to help you create a more focused topic such as:

What are you curious to discover about this topic?

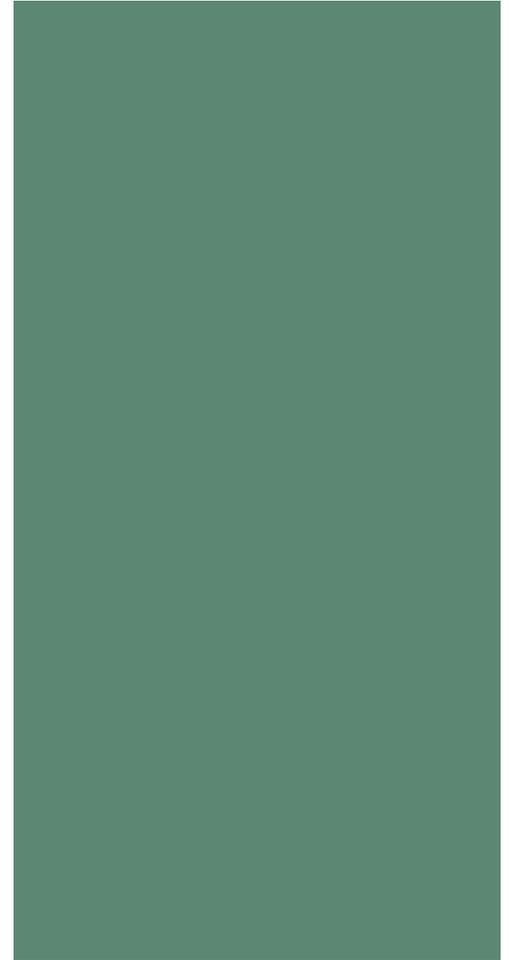
Who is affected? How?

What is the problem?

What are the advantages or disadvantages?

Why is this topic important? Why are you interested in it?

Asking yourself any of these questions will help guide you to developing a topic question. Let's apply these questions to our list of ideas and see where it takes us!



TIME AND MEMORY

What are you interested to discover about this topic?

Does time affect our memory?

Who is affected? How?

People of all groups

What is the problem?

How does our perception of time affect the way we experience the world around us?

Is the way we understand time scientifically in conflict with the way we experience it?

What are the advantages or disadvantages?

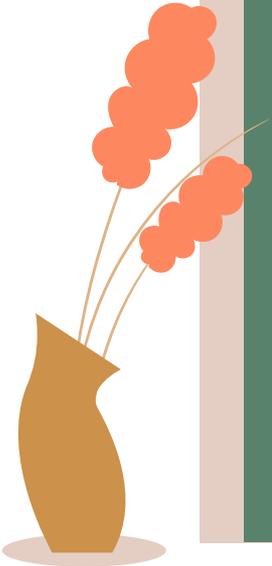
Memory is very valuable but it is also unreliable.

Why is this topic important?

Because learning about how time and memory work can help me better reflect on and understand my experiences.

Notice that I've combined two topics here. This is a really good way to focus your topic.

Also notice that some of the answers to these questions are statements and some are questions themselves. Feel free to brainstorm however you like. If a question comes to mind, write it down so you can highlight the things you are wondering about your topic which your research can help you discover!



STEP 3: FORM A RESEARCH QUESTION

- Your research topic will ultimately answer a question. So, you must develop your topic into a question that you will seek the answers for (and *later*, provide your reader with these answers). This question will serve as your **guide** throughout the paper.
- The following slide will examine a brief checklist to help you develop your research question.



RESEARCH QUESTION CHECKLIST

- Focused:** Is the topic focused on one issue or problem?
- Researchable:** Is there existing data or research on your topic? Can you conduct empirical research on the topic?
- Workable:** Can you conduct this research within the limitations of the assignment (ex. Is the idea too wide for the length of your research paper?) Can you gather and analyze the research within a reasonable window of time?
- Specific:** The word choice/terms in the research question should not be general; people, places, time, etc. should be specified.
- Complex:** The research question should be complex as in it cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”.
- Relevant:** The research question should be relevant to other members of society whether in your own community, or current time period (ex. Inequalities that started in the past and still exist today).

APPLYING THE CHECKLIST

For example, referring to the topic from the previous slide:

Young people's use of social media creates positive body image

This topic can be developed into a specific research question:

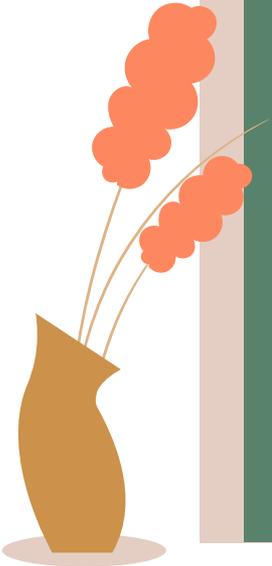
What impact does the use of social media have on body positivity for American teens?

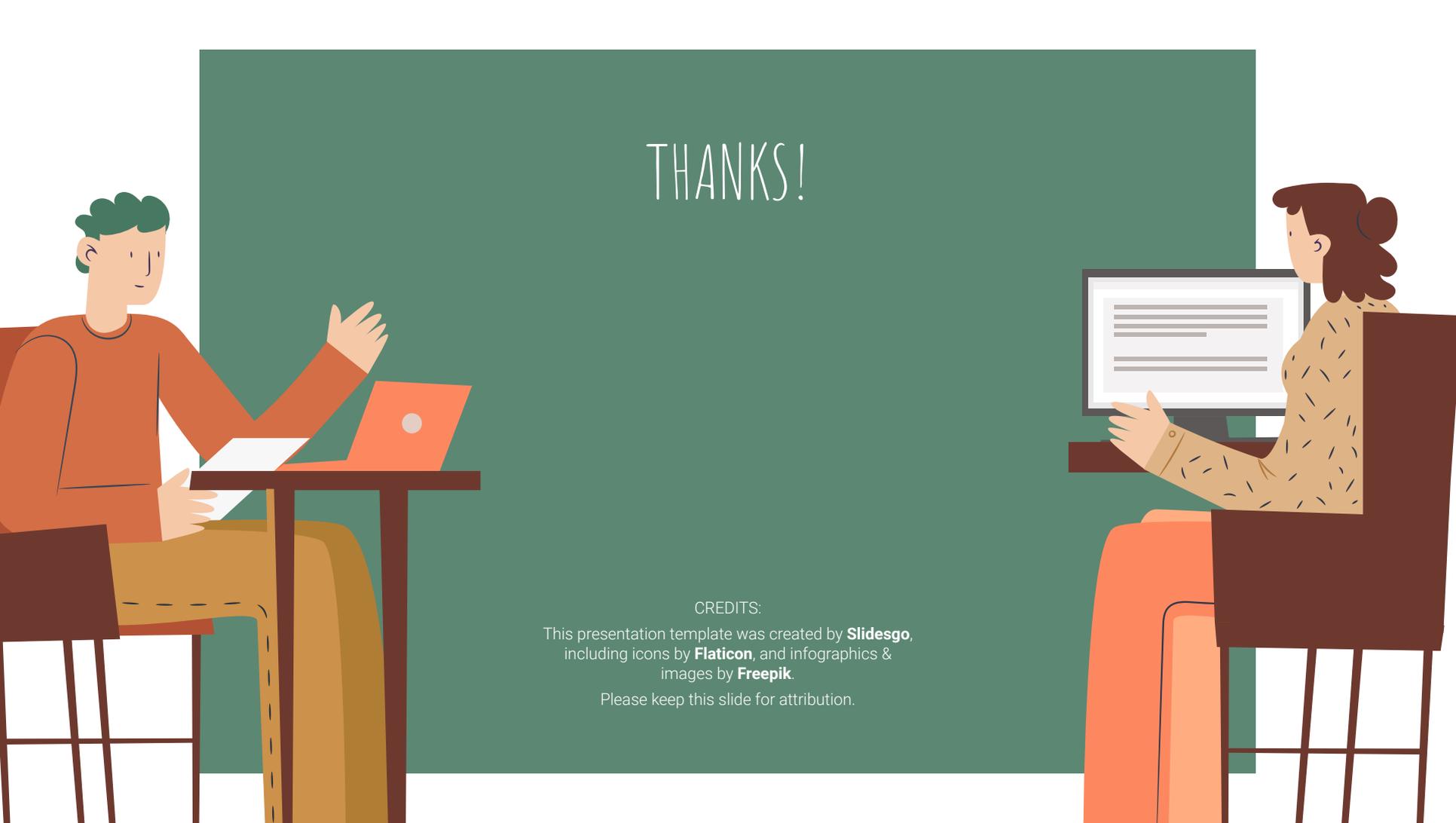
Note that the terms such as “American teens” and “body positivity” were modified to give a clearer idea of the target group and the direction of the research. In addition, this question format makes it possible for the writer to explore the possible before and after effects of being exposed to body positive messages and images, for teens. So, it would also be a complex

KEEP IN MIND:

The research question is your guide for conducting research on your topic, and there is no definite answer to be expected. The research paper will explore the answers to this question and lead to your thesis statement.

Furthermore, this guide is not your thesis statement, but it is an integral part of your research paper because it shows the question you intend to answer in your essay.



An illustration of a man and a woman in a meeting. The man, on the left, has dark curly hair and is wearing an orange long-sleeved shirt and brown pants. He is sitting on a brown stool at a dark brown table, with a laptop and papers in front of him. His right hand is raised as if speaking. The woman, on the right, has brown hair in a bun and is wearing a patterned beige sweater and orange pants. She is sitting on a brown stool at a dark brown table, with a computer monitor in front of her. The monitor displays several lines of text. The background is a dark green wall.

THANKS!

CREDITS:

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