

HOW TO CHOOSE A RESEARCH TOPIC

1

WHAT'S ON THE CURRICULUM?

- often the topic is specified / suggested by your professors
- sometimes they might have a list of possible topics on their website
- if not, there should still be some connection to their field of research: look at their papers (e.g. in EconBiz)
- ask yourself: What was the most interesting session of the seminar?



2

WHAT'S NEW?

- scan event programs and calls for papers in your field of interest (e.g. in the [EconBiz event calendar](#))
- scan the headlines of magazines or news pages and find related journal articles on the same topic
- read blogs and listen to podcasts to stay up-to-date



3

WHAT'S INTERESTING?

Your individual point of view, e.g.:

- study / work life (interactions with fellow students, interesting aspects of an internship, ...)
- hobbies and personal interests
- international experience / travel



4

FIND THE GAP!

- **Top-down-approach:**

get an overview of the topic and see which part might be interesting for you (textbooks, literature reviews)

- **Bottom-up-approach:**

look specifically for gaps in the literature (conclusions / limitations section of a paper, directions for future research)



5

NARROW IT DOWN TO A RESEARCH QUESTION!

Checklist: Is it a "good" research question?

- Is it an open-ended question (not a yes / no-question)?
Is there a question mark at the end?
- Is it answerable through research?
Is there enough literature on the topic? What theory / methods can I use?
- Is it a new question that has not been answered yet?
If there already is a paper on the exact same topic: Can I twist the question in a new direction or change methods?
- Is it manageable within the provided timeframe?
If not: Can I narrow down the question? When? Where? Who?



ASK FOR HELP!

- when stuck or in doubt - ask your prof!
- any other questions on literature search? ask us!
(Research Guide EconDesk)

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