The research question is arguably the most important part of the research process. A good research question focuses your research, frames your arguments, and engages your reader's interest. Thus, it is well worth your while to spend a considerable amount of your pre-search time focusing and rewriting your question.

A good research question is:

**Analytical:** It asks you to break something down at look at its parts. It asks you to dissect or explain.

**Arguable:** You need to take a stance and defend a point of view. Whether your answer is yes or no, you can make a valid case for your opinion.

**Researchable:** Obviously, you need to be able to find information on your topic. Many of us have framed a good research question, then couldn't find the information necessary to answer it. Know the limitations of your resources!

**Focused:** Consider the scope of your assignment. Your question should be broad enough to give you room for an argument, but focused enough that you can explore it deeply and thoroughly within your page allotment.

"What can be done to prevent substance abuse?"

In what ways can iPads be used effectively for research?

**WEAK**

These questions are analytical, but they only ask you to either list or describe, not argue a point. They’re also pretty broad.

Is there a relationship between poverty in early childhood and later substance abuse as a teen?

Is the iPad an effective all-in-one tool for curating, annotating and notetaking during research?

**STRONGER**

In order to answer these questions, you now have to take a stance and defend your position: you need to give reasons and evidence to prove your point.
Research Question Checklist:

- Is my RQ something that I am curious about and that others might care about? Does it try to solve a classroom problem?
- Does my RQ present an issue on which I can take a stand?
- Is my RQ too broad, too narrow, or OK?
- Is my RQ researchable...
- Is my RQ measurable? What type of information do I need? Can I find actual data to support or contradict a position?
- What sources will have the type of information that I need to answer my RQ (journals, surveys, interviews with people, etc)?