

---

---

# Asking Research Questions

A Low-Stakes ENG 101 Activity  
Kelly I. Aliano, PhD

---

# OER *College Writing* Textbook

[College Writing](#)

I used this text throughout the semester, in class.

This unit looked at “Prewriting” and “Thesis Sentences”

# “Asking Questions” from *College Writing*

## Asking Questions

Asking questions is a form of prewriting that allows you to:

- ask questions to develop a perspective on a subject that you think you want to write about.
- narrow a subject that you already have chosen.
- determine whether it's feasible to pursue your chosen subject, especially if you're doing a research paper.

### Ask Questions to Develop a Perspective on a Subject

Ask the journalist's “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “why” and “how” in order to:

- get a sense of the subject's scope
- determine how you may want to approach the subject ( the angle that makes sense for you to take when thinking about the subject)

### Ask Questions to Narrow a Subject

Ask questions about your subject and use the answer to activate another question until you come to a question that is a good stopping place (a focused question that you know you can research, or a focused question that you can answer on your own with examples and details).



---

# Student Activity

In quick intervals of five minutes, students were asked to jot down questions relevant to their field of study/topic of debate.

Each interval was for one of the question frames: who, what, why, when, where, why, and how

From that list of questions, we discussed which could be used to pursue a debatable topic (why and how questions versus factual questions of who, what, where, and when)

---

# “Asking Questions” from *College Writing*

Once you have a few subjects that you think might be appropriate for further development into essays or research papers, ask questions to determine each subject’s feasibility:

- What exactly do I know about the subject?
- Where did I get my knowledge (first-hand experience, books, television, newspapers, discussions with others, etc.)?
- Will my knowledge yield sufficient examples and details for me to write in some depth about this subject, or will I have to do some additional research? That is, if I want to write about this subject, what else do I need to know?
- Where can I find additional information if I need more? Books? Magazines? Journals? Interviews with co-workers or family members? Personal observations?

(this page’s text © Empire State College)

# *Forky Asks a Question*



To further explore asking and answering open-ended questions, we looked at episodes of the Disney+ show *Forky Asks a Question* and students were asked to help Forky out.

They did an individual freewrite on one of his questions:

- What is Art?
- What is Love?
- What is a Friend?

They then worked in groups to come up with a response to present to Forky/the class

In the response, they needed at least **THREE** pieces of evidence to prove their definition correct.

---

---

# Questionnaire Activity

At our next class, students completed the Research Paper Questionnaire Activity, to derive researchable questions for their final papers through a process of inquiry and problem-solving

---

---

# Questionnaire Activity

## Questionnaire for Final Research Paper

### PICKING A TOPIC:

OPTION A: Are you expanding on the topic from your personal interest essay? If so, why? That is, what do you hope to learn about by continuing to explore this topic?

OPTION B: If you are exploring something new, what is it? What do you hope to learn about it?

### CONSIDERING OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS

What is your opinion about your topic? Why does it matter, in your opinion?

What other point(s) of view might there be about your topic?

### ASKING A RESEARCH QUESTION: Based on what you wrote above, ask a question that will help you to open up exploration into what you wished to learn more about.

Propose a question about which you wish to learn more.

Once you have articulated a research question, begin freewriting your educated guesses as to answers to that question. This will prepare you for...

### CREATING A RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS: For this assignment, your HYPOTHESIS will be your preliminary answer to your research question. It will adapt & change as you learn more about your topic through focused research.

Offer a possible answer to your research question. Include your position on this topic. Be prepared to counter the opposing viewpoint(s)...

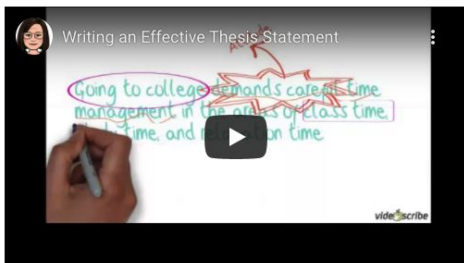
**CONSIDER THE “SO WHAT?” OF YOUR TOPIC.** While my hypothesis is interesting, it does not engage either the how or the why of that phenomenon happening (if it indeed proves to be the truth of the matter). The “SO WHAT” allows me to explore what the larger significance of my claim might be.

---

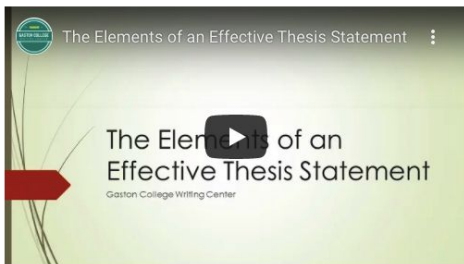


---

# Thesis Statements



We ended the day by looking at “Thesis Sentences” from *College Writing*. The videos really appealed to my students.



The Questionnaire could be handed in then for feedback or taken home and revised and then submitted at the next class.

Its ideas were meant to be synthesized into a formal 200-word proposal, which would ultimately be a high-stakes activity, scored out of 10.

[Top Video](#)

[Bottom Video](#)

---