

Controversial Topic Research Guide

BEFORE YOU RESEARCH. Take time to reflect on and answer each question.

1. What topic are you researching? Why are you looking into this topic? What, if anything, is at stake for you?
2. What are the main questions are you hoping to have answered?
3. What are your current beliefs or opinions on the topic? What may make you biased for or against this topic? What, if any, fears do you have about this topic?
4. What are the opposing views on this topic? Are there any motives behind each side? Why might each side hold the stance they do?
5. Which is the more popular or widely accepted view on this topic? Why do you think this may be?

RESEARCH PLANNING: What kind of sources can you look into (articles, books, podcasts, scientific studies, informational booklets, etc.)? What experts can you look into? What people in your life may have personal experience related to the topic? *Plan on researching both sides of the argument.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: Fill out your questions first, then when you find answers, document them (you may want to reference the source, too). Add more questions as they arise.

Questions	Answers

SOURCE WORKSHEET

Title of the source: _____

The website or organization that supplied this source: _____

Identify the Argument and its Audience:

What is this source arguing for? Against?

Who is their target audience?

Establish the Author's Credibility - *Ethos*:

Who is presenting this information?

What, if anything, makes them a credible source?

Why are they presenting this argument?

Does this source have an ulterior motive? *Remember that the general media, non-profit organizations, the government, religious organizations, science, and businesses each have their own values, goals, and agenda. Consider the information through any corresponding lens.*

Analyze the Emotional Appeal - *Pathos*

What tone does the author (or speaker) convey?

How is this source trying to make me feel?

What is this source encouraging me to do (subliminally or blatantly)?

Determine if the Argument is Logical - Logos

What evidence is used to defend the argument?

What statistics or numbers are used? Are they being used and understood in their intended way, or are they being manipulated?

Does their argument make reasonable sense?

Is there any suspicion of cherry-picking?

If a source references another source, research it - *If studies, books, or interviews are cited, do your best to find them. Check to be sure the source is referencing the information correctly (and if they're not, the initial source is unlikely credible). If possible, find out if the articles or scientific studies are sponsored or backed by a particular group.*

Source Reflection

What did you learn from this source? How did it serve you?

What was your reaction to the source? To the information?

Do you believe this source to be credible? Why or why not?

What are your current thoughts on the topic?

What further questions do you have?