

FREE eBook

9 Quick Tips For Effective Selection Of A Research Topic



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ABOUT ME

A Research Consultant, an Author, Educator and Motivational Speaker.

I am on a mission to empower Ph.D. aspirants, researcher scholars, academicians, and lifelong learners in their way to exceptional research and publish papers.

My 30 years of teaching experience, has helped to mentor students to succeed in their projects to this day. I am passionate about passing my knowledge and guiding those willing to write exceptional research but are struggling to do so.

Are you ready?

SUMAN MUNDKUR

Research Coach | Author



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**IF YOU CAN DREAM IT,
YOU CAN DO IT.**

- WALT DISNEY.



CONTENTS

01

7 stages of decision-making

02

Brainstorm

03

Shortlisting and evaluating
the options

04

Narrowing down on a topic
for research

05

Finalize your topic

06

Review your decision

07

Conclusion





7 STAGES OF DECISION-MAKING

- 1** Identify the decision
- 2** Gather relevant information
- 3** Identify the alternatives
- 4** Weigh the evidence
- 5** Choose among alternatives
- 6** Take action
- 7** Review your decision & its consequences

7 STAGES OF DECISION-MAKING

The 7 steps for effective decision-making are well known and learned in Schools and Colleges.

But when using these steps in practical life, why do students falter? But why? Why is it that it is so difficult to decide? The most common reasons are overthinking and indecisiveness.

A productivity expert Damon Zahariades suggests that

THE ONLY WAY TO OVERCOME INDECISION IS BY CONFIDENTLY MAKING SMART AND EFFECTIVE CHOICES. ONCE THE DECISION IS TAKEN, IT SHOULD LEAVE NO FEAR AND REGRETS.

Mind the gap!

The most common pitfalls to avoid:

- Decision taken in haste; there is no need to rush.
- Outsourcing decisions, nobody can decide better for you than yourself.
- Poor decision, taken without weighing the options logically.

Effective decision-making is a skill to develop and is valuable in all life aspects. This valuable skill can help you all your life, helping you make better use of resources, save time and effort and make you more productive as a student/Scholar/ Researcher /Entrepreneur/ Scientist/future Employee.



Making decisions is a continuous process

throughout the research journey. Starting with the topic selection, students often find it hard to narrow down to a topic to research on. It is a matter of applying the same principles of planning, controlling, and evaluating options. This has to be done systematically.

Let us consider the decisions taken in the process of topic selection.

In any academic activity, students have a lot of freedom in selecting a topic. In school, children are asked to choose a topic for essay writing, choose among questions and sub-questions in an examination, and choose between elective subjects and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that promote the overall development of personality. In academic research, the research project's objective is to learn by self-study.

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Begin with identifying why you need to decide and the nature of the decision. Selecting a topic for research can be the focus of a research scholar, as it will involve time, attention, and resources for the next few years of your life.

If you have a broad area of research in mind, you can think in four stages:

1. Brainstorm
2. Shortlist and evaluate options
3. Narrow down the topic
4. Finalize your topic
5. Review your decision

BRAINSTORM

The first step of brainstorming ideas that are generated can be noted down. The ideas may be random that may or may not be related to a particular subject domain. Ideas could be from different subjects, yet they must be 'caught' as they are generated. A blank sheet of paper or a word file should serve the purpose of having the ideas 'caught.' Journaling is a good habit.

Stephan Kotler suggested that you *"Write down 25 things- by hand- you are curious about, as specific as possible. Now that you have a list of what you are curious about, it's time to start hunting for overlap between the items. This will help you identify your passions, and your next intrinsic motivator. Find a niche that activates all your intrinsic motivators. This requires a growth mindset, a truth filter, and lots of reading."*



Often, ideas may be associated with your own experiences, interactions, aspirations, desires, and goals.

QUICK TIP #1

The Pomodoro technique works best when you give the mind intermittent breaks and spend time in focused activity of recording ideas that pass your mind. What is needed is a peaceful place without disturbance to focus the mind on 'letting in the flow.' Allow momentum to pick up, and you can increase the 'focused time'.

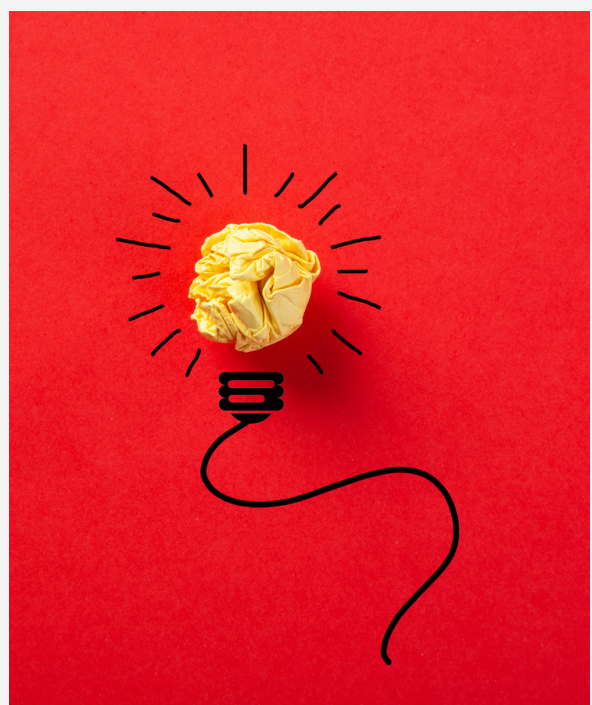
QUICK TIP #2

Refining the ideas generated by brainstorming is the first step. It will then be possible to group these ideas, eliminate some, improve, evaluate and refine them.

QUICK TIP #3

Research on your own to gather as much information (just as you would do before purchasing your new mobile phone). Make academic resources your starting point and not just any websites. Begin with the latest issue and go to backward issues. Refer to academic sources like Journal articles. You will gather the latest research and review papers.

Using your ideas and thoughts, the next is to discuss your ideas with others, especially your peers and family.



SHORTLISTING AND EVALUATING THE OPTIONS

Being focused on fewer options, you can evaluate them better. The pros and cons. It is like 'weeding out' what you do not want to do rather than what to. When you focus on any activity, it opens up your brain to learn it. This learning helps in the future. While repeating that activity, you will not find it difficult as you have already internalized it. The same case is with learning to choose between topics.

QUICK TIP #4

The topics can now be defined as a question or set of several questions. You can break the main question into several questions covering as many aspects of the topic as possible. Creating a mind map at this stage can be beneficial to prepare a mind map.



**CREATE A MIND MAP
AT THIS STAGE**

USE THE FUNNEL SYSTEM



NARROWING DOWN ON A TOPIC FOR RESEARCH

Has it happened that you have too many options to choose from? Yet, the mind is blank and cannot decide which to take up. The great idea is to trick the mind...

QUICK TIP 5: Use the funnel system

Using a Funnel system to narrow your topic seems practical, starting from the broad subject area to the specific one. By evaluating and testing your topic by thinking logically, you can make a decision. This final decision depends on your skill in decision-making.

Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the topic that has been shortlisted. No research topic is "too good" or "too bad." Evaluating the perceived benefits of researching an exciting idea is a matter of evaluating it. The topic allows you to be sure that you find no benefits.

HOW TO STRATEGIZE THE RESEARCH TOPIC

The mind is in a state of confusion when there are two or more topics that are shortlisted. All of these may be fascinating, trending subjects, relevant to your field of study, a topic with a good scope for research, and 'sound good to tell people. There may be a perceived 'prestige ' attached to the topic. It is better to list the plus and minus of each subject in various parameters. Young researchers seldom do this, and the confusion continues in mind.

Shortlisted your topics and still confused about which to choose?

QUICK TIP 6:

Here is how to strategize:
Wow! If you have shortlisted, you have successfully decided what to eliminate. Only two or three topics are here on your platter for comparison. Maybe just two if one is eliminated.



QUICK TIP 7: Consider combining two topics that may be related.

It may widen the scope of your research. Probably you will be able to generate rich data and discussion.

Now, consider if both your topics are:

- Relevant research in recent publications in your field of study
- Current and trending
- Solving real-time problems
- Good scope for further research
- Covered by several academic journals on the subject and websites

QUICK TIP 8: Phone a friend!

As a researcher, do you feel comfortable discussing your research topic to find out what others feel about the topic? Call your peers to seek their opinion.

QUICK TIP 9: Check websites for Researchers in the field

The University websites display the faculty profiles with their research areas. It is easier once you know the faculty has expertise in your chosen topic. Google Scholar, Academia, and ResearchGate are other platforms where you can find experts in the field. Find how you can contact them and your **professors, senior colleagues, and experts** in the field of study. Schedule appointments to see if they support your ideas or contribute new ones to your own.



EVALUATION OF IDEAS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOPIC

Do others perceive the topic as a topic worth researching? Do they encourage you to go ahead?

- Do they compliment you for having selected the topic?
- Do you feel it is prestigious to be researching the topics?
- Is this of interest? What is the value that you see in it?
- Will it interest the others? Particularly your supervisor? Will it help the others? Will it be beneficial for Society or help the community? Will I feel good talking about it?

Once you write it down, you can choose 2 or 3 areas you want to research. Please write down the reasons why you consider them good. So, this is to clarify to yourself your intentions. If this is very interesting, it will help me in career advancement and personal growth and benefit Society or the community. Go for it.

What kind of impact should it have? What will be the outcomes? What have the other researchers found on this subject? What are the different aspects other researchers have covered?



These will help you how valuable this study will be and to who. Research should value others, people, the planet, and profit. The Society must be able to benefit from your findings.

So, there is no point in thinking about what 'you want to know. Though you have the freedom to 'do what you want to,' for example, if your topic has the insight of missing evidence, that is the actual value of research.

An idea or topic needs to be evaluated, both by yourself, considering the above points. It is better not to ask others to judge your idea or topic. "Is this a good topic?" This question will only lead them to say "yes." Sometimes you may find an answer in the negative; then, you are back to square one. You will not want that.

Consider asking people who know you and know what you do. If you think a topic is too familiar, you may find others saying, "That's great" or "amazing," making you change your opinion. You may have different opinions from those who do not know you.



REVIEW

REVIEW YOUR DECISION

Based on your own and others' opinions, when you have decided as final, you can take a pause and relook at it after some time. Probably the next day, when you look at the topic with 'fresh eyes', you may be able to think differently. Listen to your instinct and finalize. This way, you can develop your topic. If not, it is time to revise, rethink the topic, and improve. You may now be sure of yourself and communicate confidently, making your message more effective!



CONCLUSION

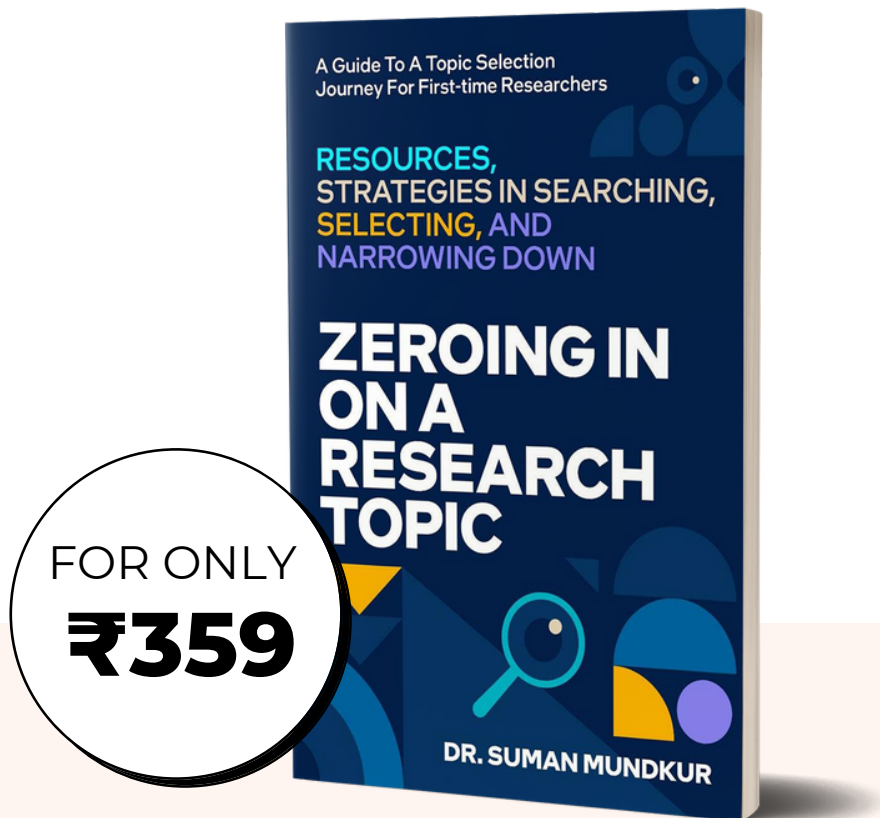
Choose a place free from distractions and focus your attention on your thoughts. Research sufficiently well. Use funneling to narrow down choices. Brainstorm ideas that come to you. Shortlist ideas by weighing the pros and cons and eliminating the least important. Note them down as questions and notes. Journaling and using mind-maps to create research plans around the topic. Research well to be able to make effective decisions. Take the opinion of others but listen to your gut feeling. Take a decision without fear, stick to it, and do not regret it. As they say, everything happens for good!



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ZEROING IN ON A RESEARCH TOPIC

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LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!



I hope you found this ebook valuable. I always try to overdeliver and if you have any questions pls feel to reach out to me on any of my social media. Look forward to my emails!



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