



## Topic Toss:

### Facilitating Student Research Ideas

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The Topic Toss strategy was developed to help students who are struggling to develop research questions. This strategy has proved most helpful with students who are struggling to form valid research questions/hypotheses and is especially useful for students who are being required to engage in research for the first time.

#### Materials Needed:

- 2 wooden blocks, approximately 1-1.5 inches square (can be purchased at <http://www.woodnshop.com> or any general crafts store)
- A computer with a random number generator program installed (several free random number generators can be downloaded from [www.download.com](http://www.download.com))

On the first wooden block, on each side, you will write the words "Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How." On the second block you will write the words "Is/Are, Can, Did, Will, Might, Could/Should/Would."

You should then compile a list of topics relevant to a discipline or specific area of study as desired and number each topic sequentially. For example, this strategy was used in a 12<sup>th</sup> grade psychology class and a list of broad psychology topics was used (anxiety, stress, dreams, language, etc.).

The student will roll the dice to determine the start to their question and select a topic at random via the random number generator. The student will then write down each of three rolls and topic selections and write a sentence out of each starter word and topic. For example, if the student rolls "How" and "Might" and is randomly assigned "Phobias" they might create the sentence: "**How might phobias** be extinguished?"

Not all combinations of words and topics will be able to yield extraordinary research questions so it is recommended that the student roll the dice and select a topic at least three times. After creating their questions they should select their best question, modify and/or assimilate their best questions, or create a totally new question to use for a research assignment. Even if they do not use a question directly developed from the use of this strategy, they will begin to think about how research questions can begin. This strategy should be useful for any class that requires the student to conduct research, be it scientific, literary, historical, etc.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Roll your dice and pick a topic to jump-start your research ideas!

Roll # 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Who, What, Where, When, Why, How) (Is, Can, Could, Might, Is, Did) (Topic)

Question 1: \_\_\_\_\_?

Roll # 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Who, What, Where, When, Why, How) (Is, Can, Could, Might, Is, Did) (Topic)

Question 2: \_\_\_\_\_?

Roll # 3: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Who, What, Where, When, Why, How) (Is, Can, Could, Might, Is, Did) (Topic)

Question: \_\_\_\_\_?

Now pick your favorite question or create a new one now that you have some ideas:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?