



## How to Narrow a Research Topic



## How to Narrow a Research Topic

### Standards

- GLE 0701.3.4 Refine strategies for editing and revising written work.
- ✓ 0701.3.4 Develop focused, appropriate, and interesting topics for writing.
- GLE 0701.4.1 Define and narrow a problem or research topic.



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## How to Narrow a Research Topic

### Tips on picking a good topic

- Know the assignment.
- Interests you.
- Information is readily available.
- Relevant but not so new there is no information out there.



## How to Narrow a Research Topic

### Things to avoid

- Opinion based.
- Vague or too broad.
- Controversial issues.
- Remember: It must be in the form of a question.



## How to Narrow a Research Topic

### Term Paper Topic

- This is not a report.
- You are looking for relationships - cause and effect is the most common.
- Begin with:
  - I wonder how...?
  - I wonder why...?



## How to Narrow a Research Topic

### Term Paper Topic

- Written in form of question
- Example key words: impact, affect, increase/decrease, cause

*How does Topic A affect Topic B*



## How to Narrow a Research Topic

When your research topic is too broad, ask yourself these questions:

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?



## How to Narrow a Research Topic

Let's see how this works with an example: **school**

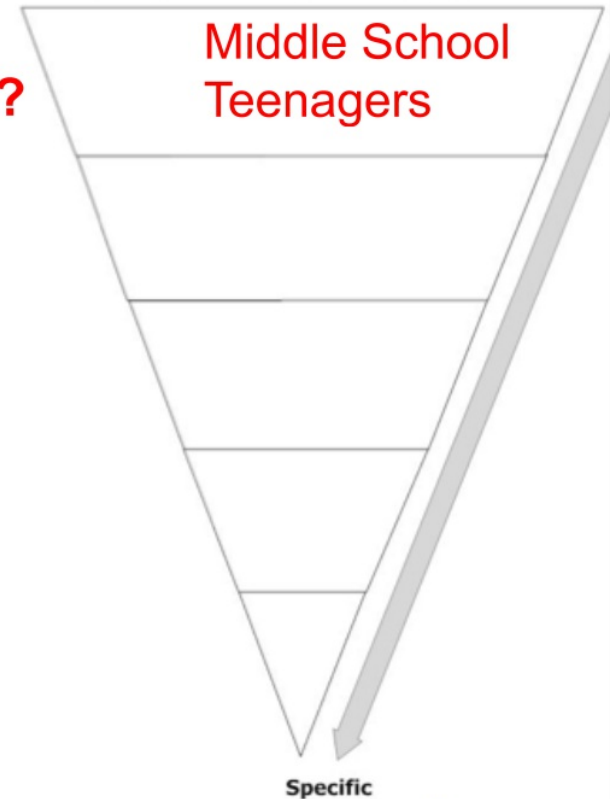
This topic is too broad (general) to write about in a short paper. We need to make it narrower (more specific).





# How to Narrow a Research Topic

**Who?**



**Who?**

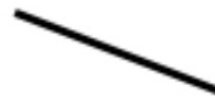
**TOPIC: School**



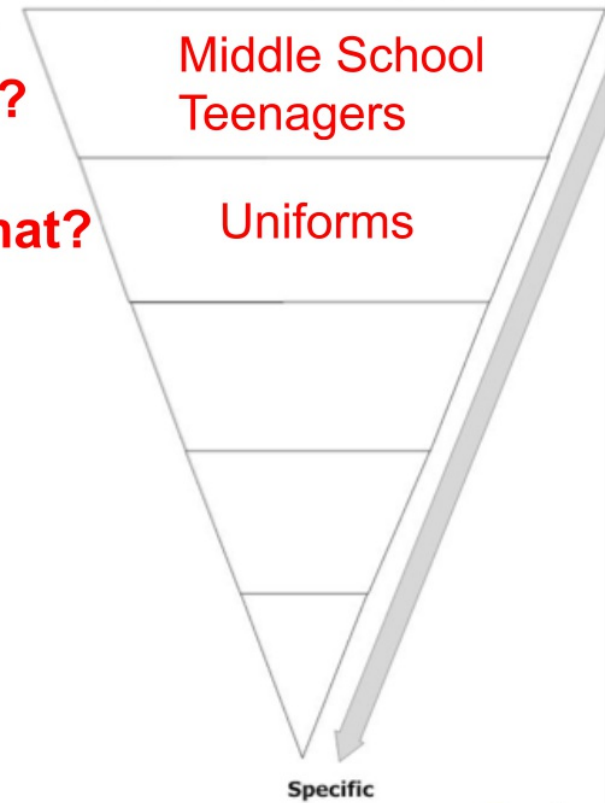
Age

Gender

Race or  
Ethnicity



# How to Narrow a Research Topic **Who?**



What?  
Things related to topic

**What?**

**TOPIC: School**

What about school?

Uniforms

Lunches

Classrooms

**NEW TOPIC:**  
School uniforms for Middle School teenagers.



# How to Narrow a Research Topic

**Who?**

Middle School  
Teenagers

**What?**

Uniforms

**When?**

modern day

Specific

**When?**

TOPIC: School

When in school?

Current or  
historical  
view

Period of  
life

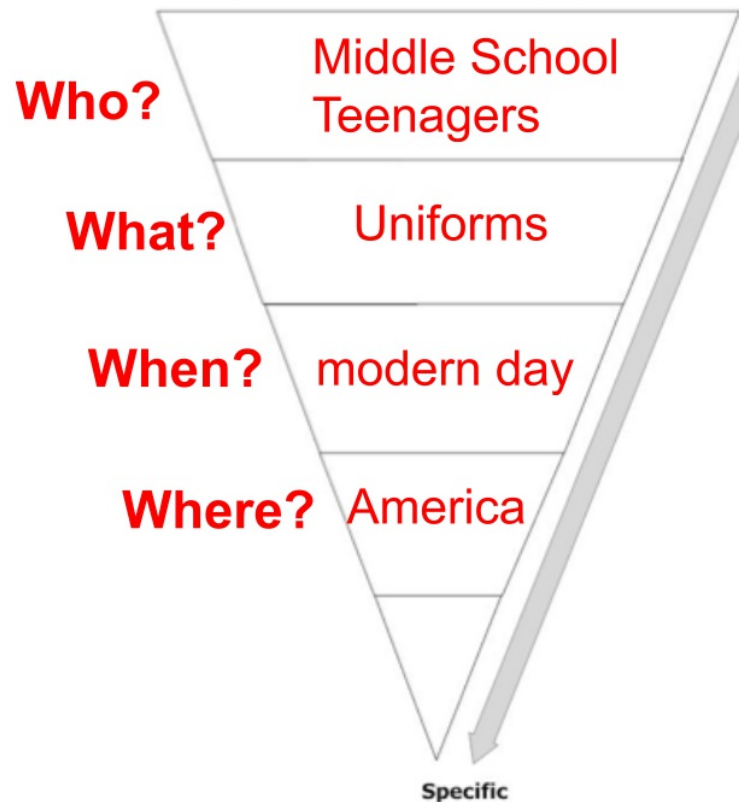
**NEW TOPIC:**

School Uniforms  
for modern day  
Middle School  
teenagers.



# How to Narrow a Research Topic

Topic: School **Inverted Triangle**  
Start with general/broad idea on the top row and try to specify the idea next row



**Where?**

TOPIC: School

Schools where?

States

Regions

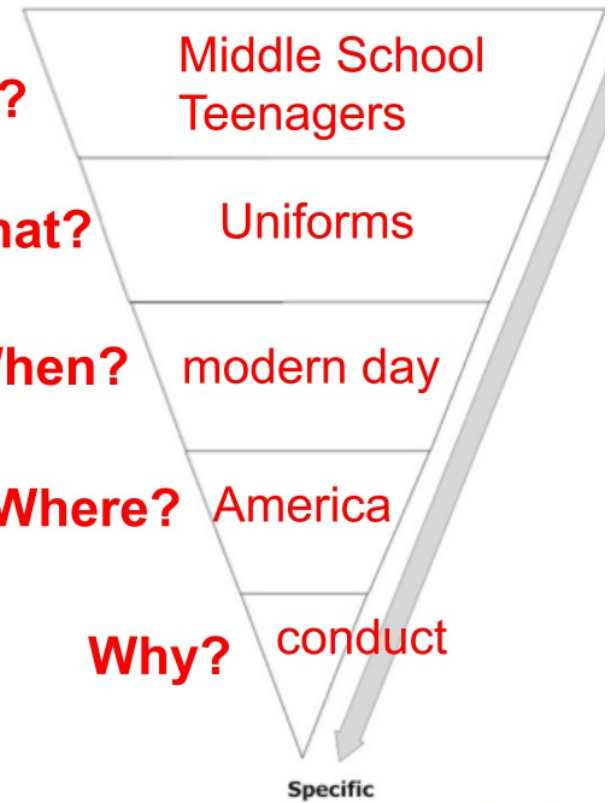
Countries



**NEW TOPIC:**  
School Uniforms  
for modern day  
Middle School  
teenagers in  
America



# How to Narrow a Research Topic **Who?**



*Why?*  
*reason/cause*  
*how →*  
*what/who → topic*

**Why?**

**TOPIC: School**

Why did they start?

Grades

Conduct

Reasons



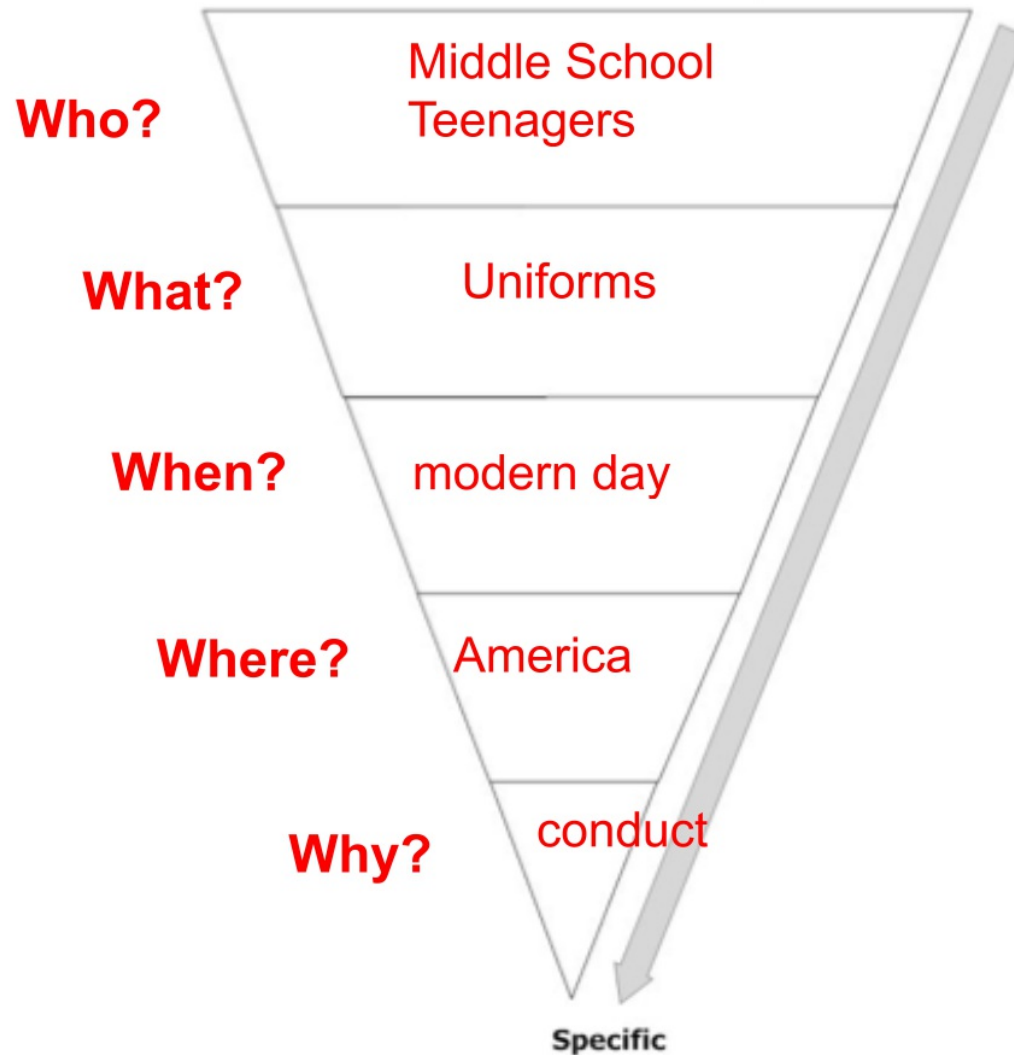
**NEW TOPIC:**  
School Uniforms for modern day Middle School teenagers and how/why conduct is better



Topic: School

### Inverted Triangle

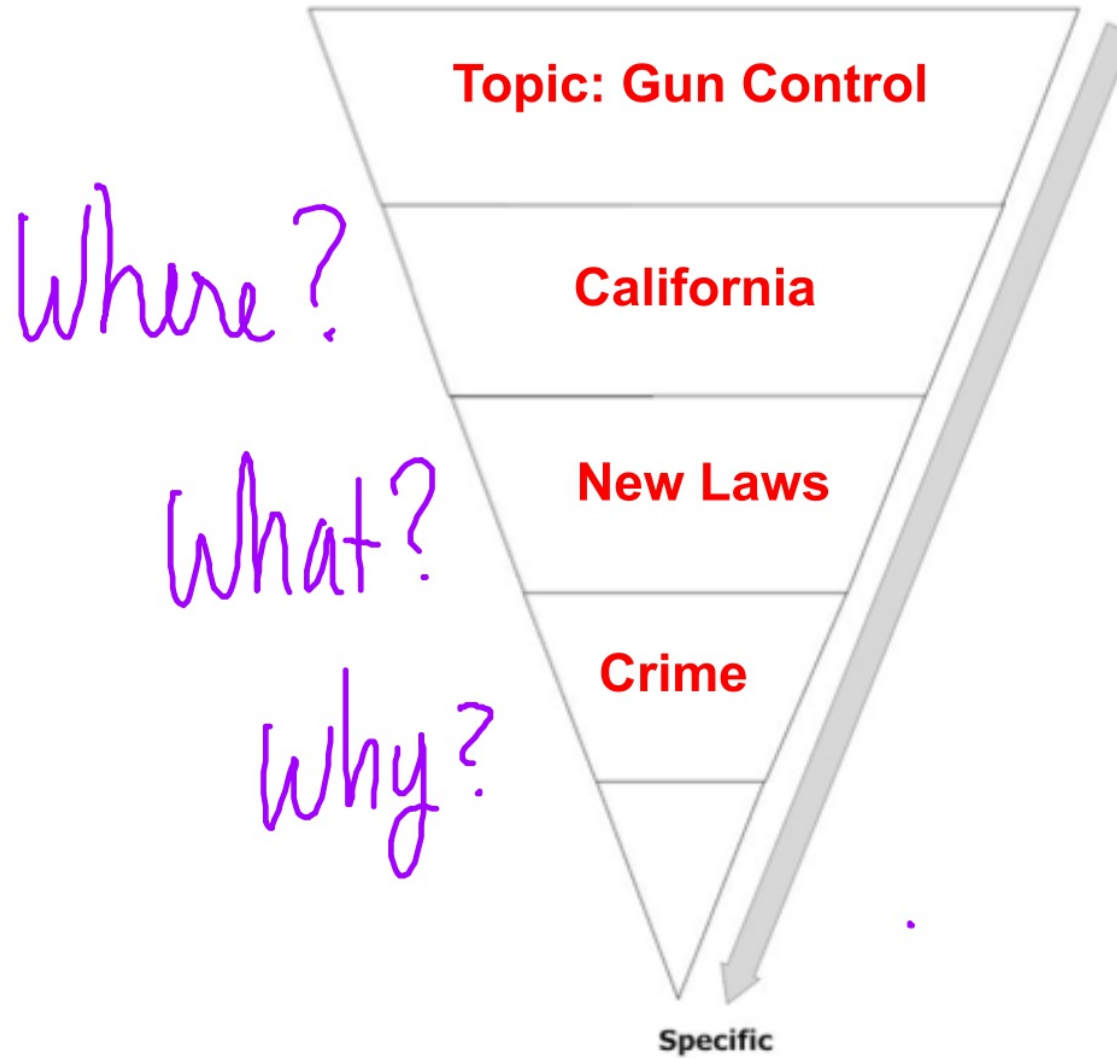
Start with general/broad idea on the top row and try to specify the idea next row



**How does school uniforms impact conduct of today's middle school teenagers in America?**

## Inverted Triangle

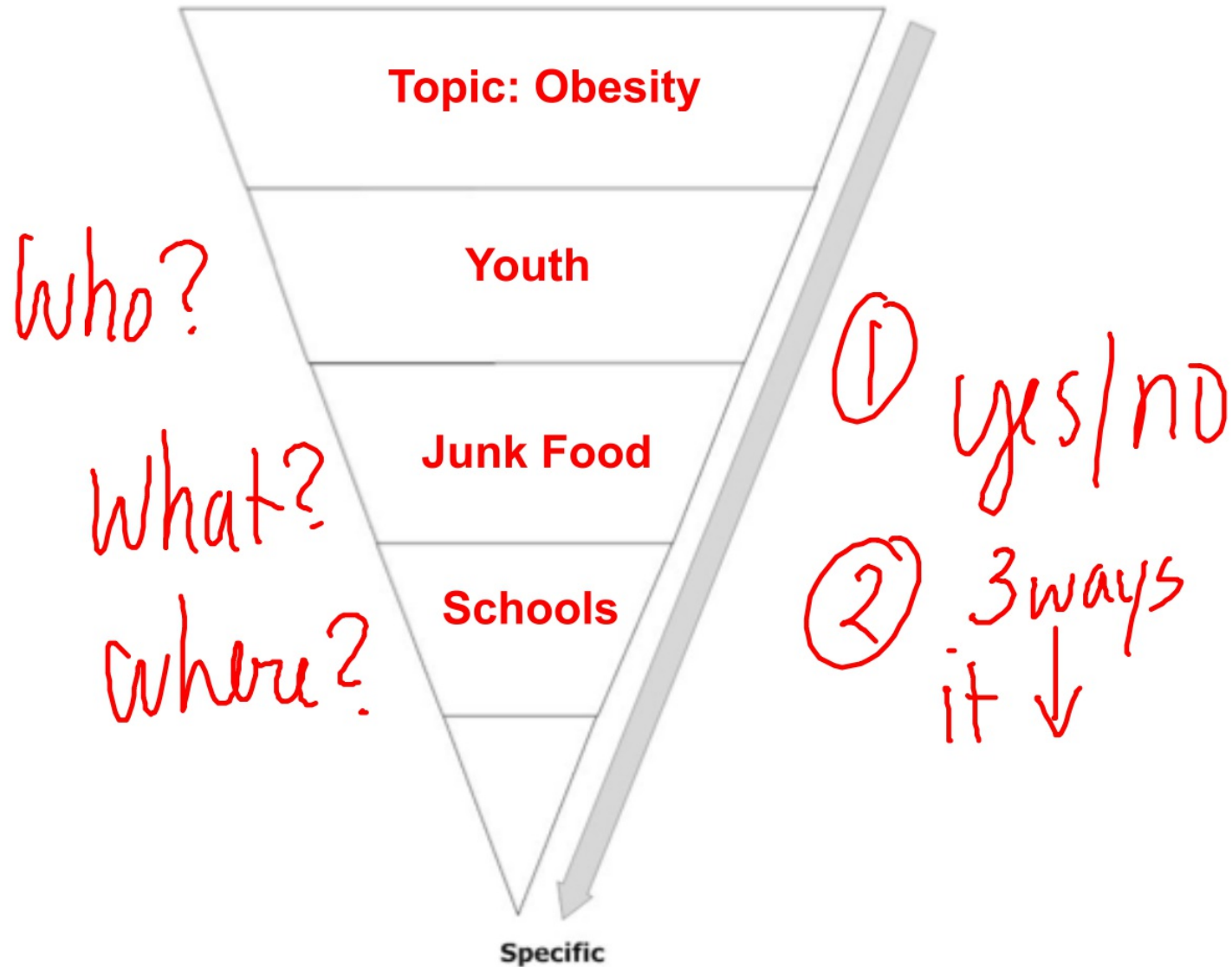
Start with general/broad idea on the top row and try to specify the idea next row



**Would there be less crime in California if new laws controlling guns were passed?**

## Inverted Triangle

Start with general/broad idea on the top row and try to specify the idea next row



**Could the obesity epidemic plaguing our youth be solved by eliminating junk food from schools?**



## Developing a Research Question:



	A hit!
	Close!
	Miss!

**Are children who play video games more likely to be violent?**

**Do video games contribute to bad behavior?** (What bad behavior? on whom?)

**What are the effects of video games on society?** (Too broad: what effects? on whom?)

## Main Concepts for effective research:

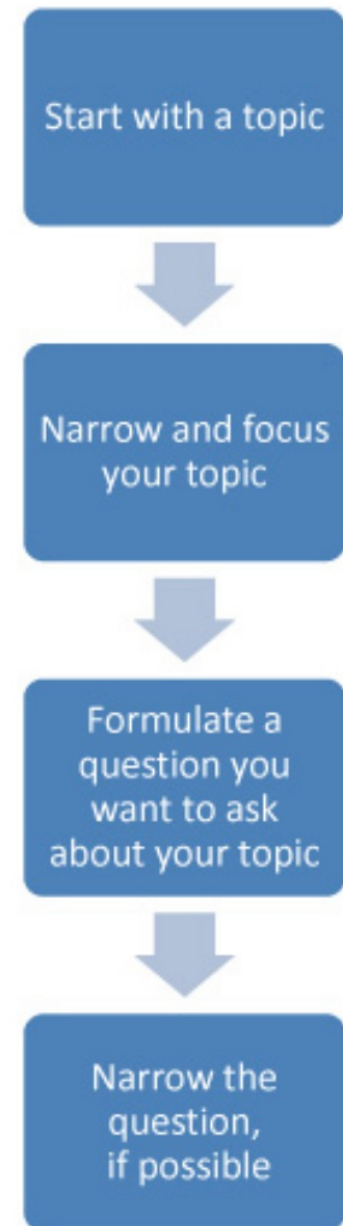
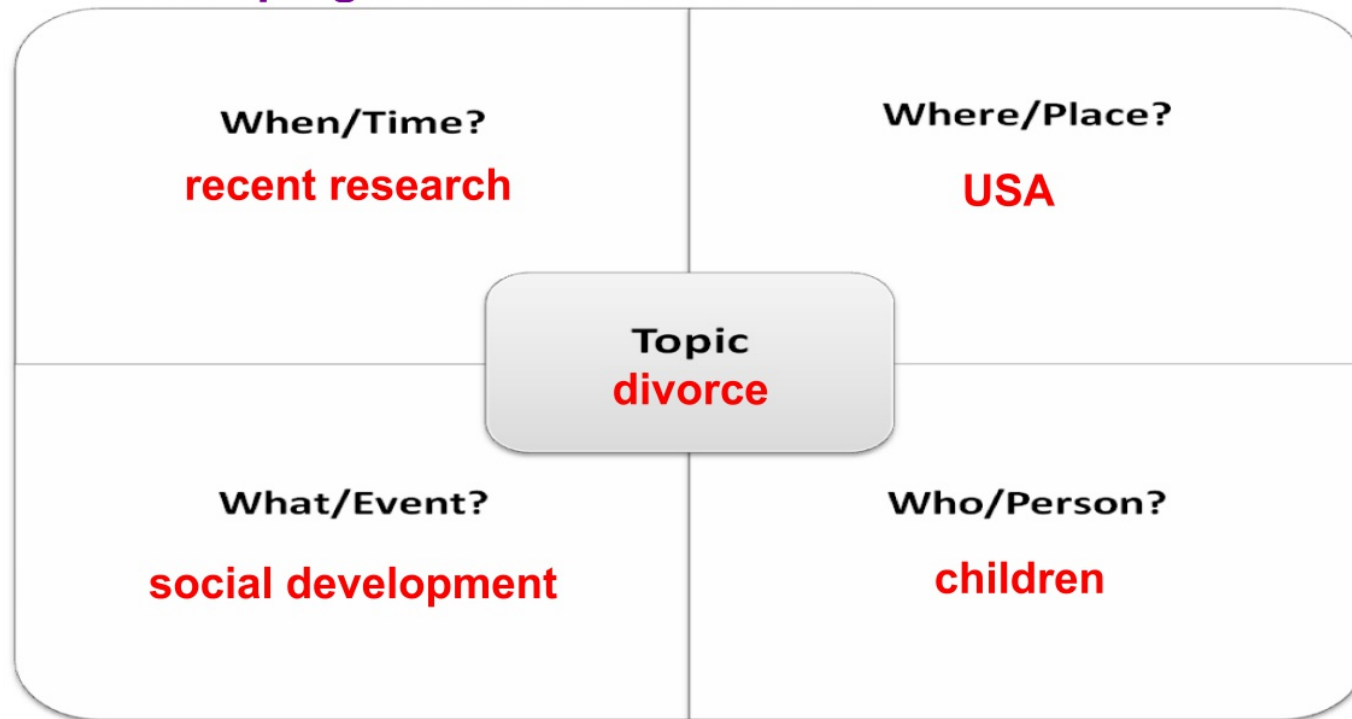
Circle three main concepts in your research question and brainstorm synonyms or other keywords that would narrow or broaden your topic.

Example:

Are children who play video games more likely to be violent?



## Developing a Research Question:



	<b>A hit!</b>
	<b>Close!</b>
	<b>Miss!</b>

**How does divorce influence children's social development?**

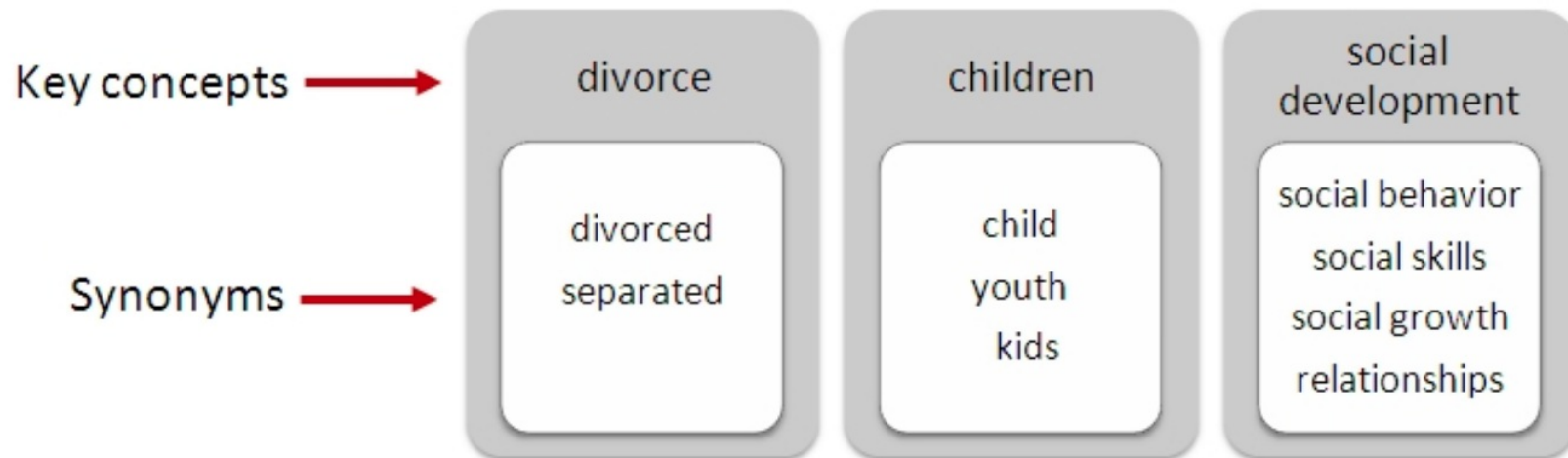
**What effect does divorce have on children?** (What effect?)

**How will the aftermath of divorce affect humanity?** (Too broad: what aspect? who?)

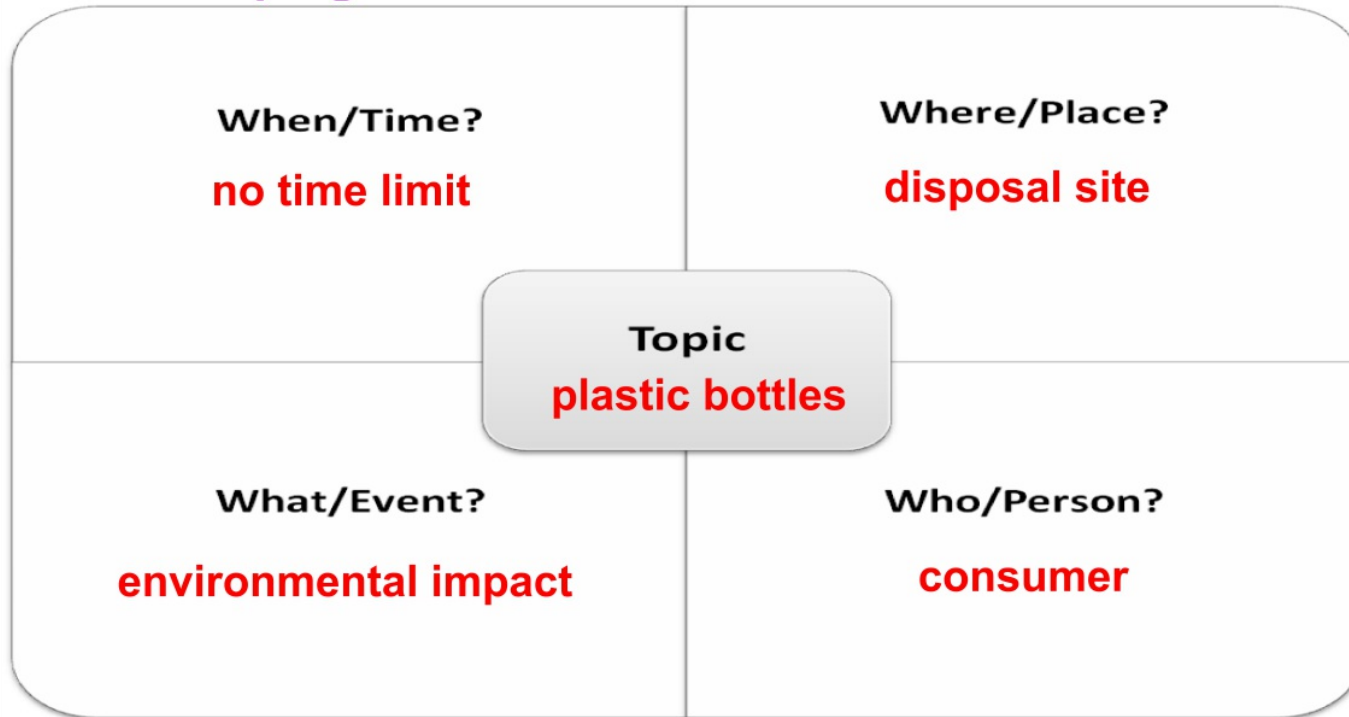
## Main Concepts for effective research:

### Example 2

How does divorce influence children's social development?



## Developing a Research Question:



	<b>A hit!</b>
	<b>Close!</b>
	<b>Miss!</b>

**What is the environmental impact of plastic water bottles?**

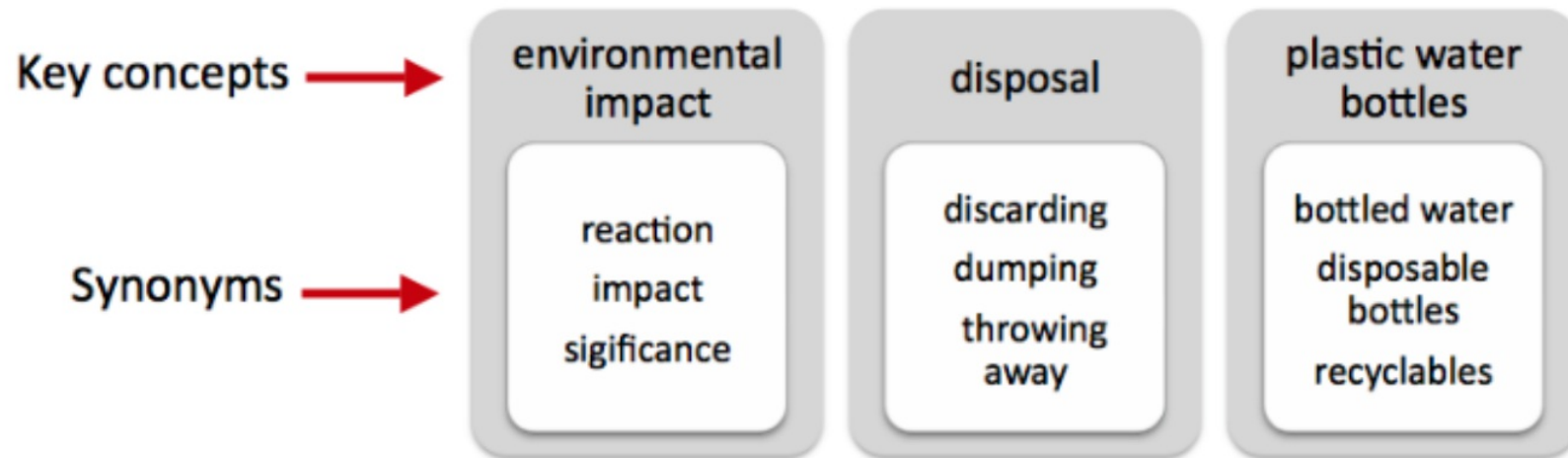
**What is the impact of bottled water on the environment?** (What aspect of bottled water?)

**How does trash pollute the environment?** (Too broad: what kind of trash?)

## Main Concepts for effective research:

### Example 3

What is the environmental impact of the disposal of plastic water bottles?



## How to Narrow a Research Topic

Which is the **most** focused topic?

- A. Effect of soil erosion in the tropical rain forest.
- B. Diet of the toucan bird in the Costa Rican rain forest.
- C. Mammals and reptiles in the tropical rain forests.
- D. Plants and vegetation native to Hawaiian rain forests.



## How to Narrow a Research Topic

Which is most broad topic?

- A. How many students cheat on tests and assignments?
- B. Is Attention Deficit Disorder over diagnosed today?
- C. Will Global Warming ever stop?
- D. What is nanotechnology?





## How to Narrow a Research Topic



Which is the *most* narrow topic?

- A. What were the effects of Nuclear Warfare in Hiroshima after WWII?
- B. Cars
- C. Will global warming force all polar bears to become extinct?
- D. What are the effects of running a car with platinum spark plugs versus copper spark plugs?



Exit Ticket:

