Focus the Lens

Revise a broad topic into a researchable question.

10.R.1.A "Formulate and revise questions about a research topic, broadening or narrowing the inquiry as necessary."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline all three research-question versions, circle the details that make the final version narrower, and number the versions from broadest to most focused.

From Heat Concern to Research Question

1. When a coastal city experienced several unusually hot summers, a student research team began with the question, "How does heat affect our city?" The question named a real concern, but it was too broad to guide a useful search. "Heat" could mean air temperature, building materials, health, energy use, or ocean conditions. "Our city" included neighborhoods with different tree cover, housing, and traffic. Before collecting sources, the team listed what the question left unclear. They decided that a workable inquiry needed a population, a place, a time period, and an effect they could investigate.

2. First, the team narrowed its topic to summer heat and residents' health. They considered asking, "How do high summer temperatures affect residents' health in our city?" This version gave the inquiry an effect and a season, yet it still covered every resident and every neighborhood. A local clinic had published data showing more heat-related emergency visits during hot weather, but the data did not identify every cause of those visits. The team avoided asking whether heat alone caused illness. Instead, they looked for a question that would let them compare a clear measure, such as emergency visits, across a manageable group and area.

3. After examining a city map, the team learned that the Riverside district has few large trees and many paved parking lots. They revised their inquiry again: "During June through August 2025, how did the number of heat-related emergency visits among Riverside residents ages 65 and older compare with visits among residents ages 65 and older in the greener Hillview district?" This question is narrower because it identifies two districts, an age group, a defined measure, and a three-month period. It also invites comparison instead of assuming that pavement caused the difference. The team could search for hospital summaries, temperature records, tree-canopy maps, and census data, while noting limits in each source.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why was the team's original question too broad for a useful research search? Name two unclear parts of the question.

2. How did the team narrow its topic in its first revision, and what was still too broad about that revision?

3. Why did the team avoid a question that asked whether heat alone caused illness?

4. Identify four details in the final question that make it more focused than the earlier versions.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a school or community topic. Write one broad research question, then revise it twice so that your final question includes a specific population, place, time period, and measurable effect or comparison.

ANSWER KEY

Focus the Lens

GRADE 10 · 10.R.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline all three research-question versions, circle the details that make the final version narrower, and number the versions from broadest to most focused. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why was the team's original question too broad for a useful research search? Name two unclear parts of the question.	**"Heat" could refer to several different conditions or effects, and "our city" included many different neighborhoods. The question also did not name a population, time period, or specific effect.**
2	How did the team narrow its topic in its first revision, and what was still too broad about that revision?	**The team focused on summer heat and residents' health. However, the question still included every resident and every neighborhood in the city.**
3	Why did the team avoid a question that asked whether heat alone caused illness?	**The clinic data showed more heat-related emergency visits during hot weather, but it did not identify every cause of those visits. The evidence could not prove that heat alone caused illness.**
4	Identify four details in the final question that make it more focused than the earlier versions.	**Accept any four: June through August 2025, heat-related emergency visits, Riverside residents, ages 65 and older, comparison with Hillview residents ages 65 and older, and the two named districts.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Broad: How does food waste affect our school? Revision 1: How does cafeteria food waste affect students at Lincoln High School? Final: During the fall 2026 semester, how many unopened packaged lunch items are discarded each week in Lincoln High School's cafeteria, and how does that number compare across the ninth- and tenth-grade lunch periods?

Accept varied revisions when each version becomes more focused and the final question includes the required limits. The final question should be researchable and should not assume that one factor definitely caused an outcome.