

ACADEMIC WRITING IN ENGLISH: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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Becoming Curious

To write effectively about a topic, you must become curious about that topic. You should ideally be driven by a desire to understand your topic more thoroughly.

In This Video

- ▶ This video will focus on strategies for generating research questions
- ▶ Please complete the activities as you watch this video
- ▶ Pause the video when needed to give yourself time to generate questions

Activity, Generating Questions: Step One

- ▶ **On a blank piece of paper**
 - ▷ At the top, write the title of the tentative topic you created in Video #3
 - ▷ For example, “Plastics in the Ocean” or “Strategies for Reducing Littering on Campus”
 - ▷ Spend 2-3 minutes briefly writing about why you chose your topic.
 - ▷ What interested you about that topic?
 - ▷ Why is it important to you?
 - ▷ Why should it be important to others?

Activity, Generating Questions: Step Two

- ▶ On the same sheet of paper
 - ▷ Spend five minutes and briefly list everything you know about your topic
 - ▷ What are some surprising facts?
 - ▷ What is the extent of the problem?
 - ▷ Are there common misconceptions about your topic?
 - ▷ Are there important trends or controversies involving your topic?

Activity, Generating Questions: Step Three

- ▶ Spend 10-15 minutes creating a list of questions about your topic that you would like to answer in your paper
 - ▷ Make this list as long as possible
 - ▷ Take up different perspectives and stances on the topic you have selected
 - ▷ What do you need to know in order to write about your topic?

Activity, Generating Questions: Step Four

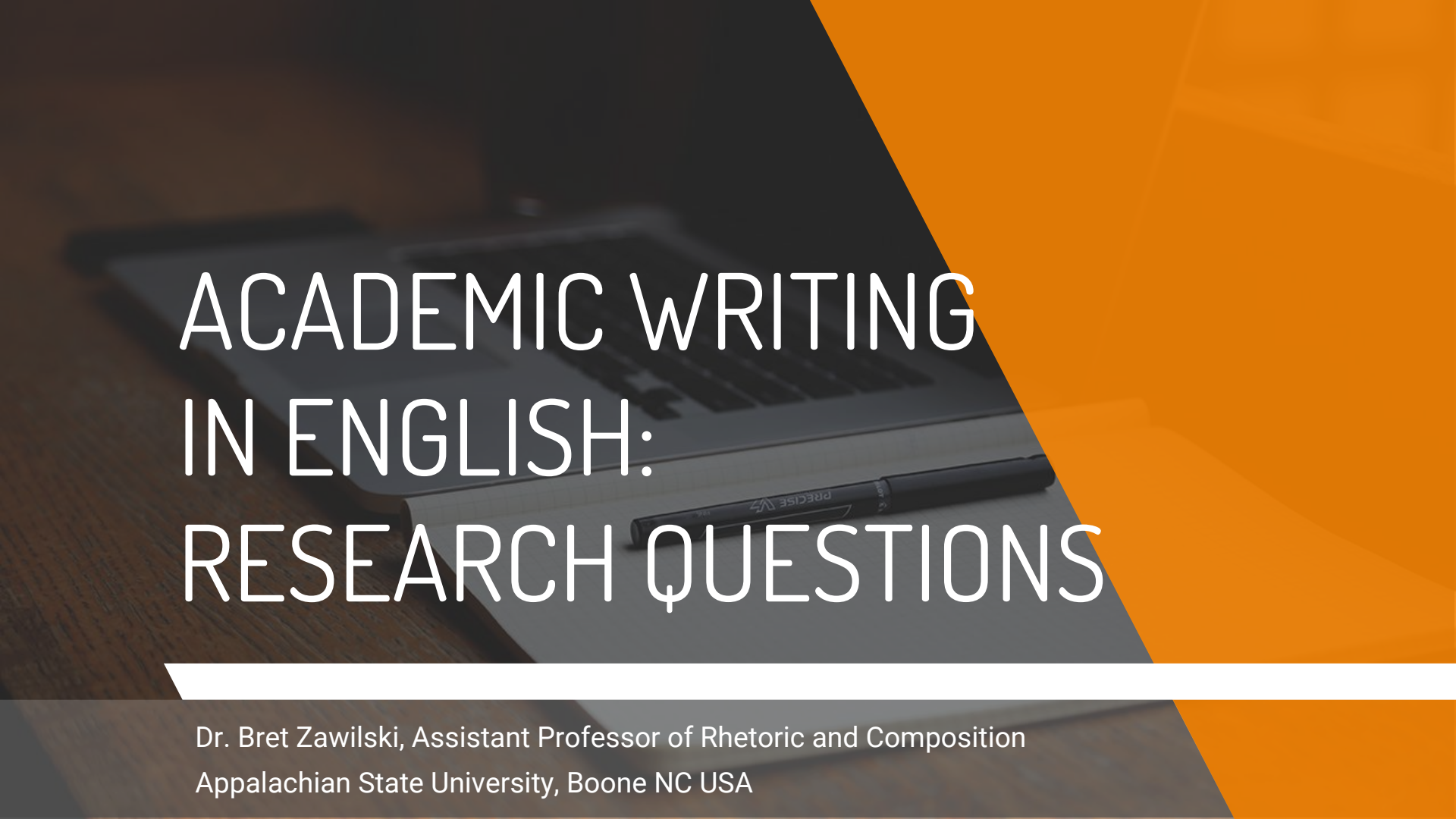
- ▶ Finally, circle the questions you asked that you think are
 - ▷ Most important to a discussion of your topic, or
 - ▷ Most interesting to answer.
 - ▷ As you circle these questions, also begin thinking about how you might answer these questions
 - ▷ What kinds of research will you need to conduct?
 - ▷ Do you need to talk to an expert?

Activity, Finding a Focusing Question

- ▶ On a separate sheet of paper:
 - ▷ At the top, write down the one question you generated that you think would be the most interesting focus for your paper.
 - ▷ This will serve as your focusing question
 - ▷ Below your focusing question, create a new list of questions that you will need to answer in order to address your focusing question.
 - ▷ Example Focusing Question: How can we address the problem of littering on our campus?
 - ▷ Supporting Questions: Where does littering most commonly occur on campus? What recycling options are present for students and faculty? What policies exist?

Activity, Finding a Focusing Question

- ▶ Your focusing question will likely become the main focus of your paper:
 - ▷ It is okay if your focusing question changes as you write
 - ▷ View writing as an opportunity to explore the question you are asking
 - ▷ You should not approach any research question with an answer already in mind
- ▶ View the additional materials on research:
 - ▷ Video #11
 - ▷ Video #12



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