When planning a writing assignment, it is useful to clarify the 'cornerstones' that provide its foundation before starting to write or research in depth.

The following five questions are essential for providing transparency and a clear sense of direction for yourself, your supervisors and your readers. The questions come in no particular order, but rather emerge dynamically from the process of writing:

- What do I want to know/investigate? (research question)
- What do I expect to find out, based on the current state of research on my topic? (hypothesis)
- How can I find this out? (method(s))
- What can I use as a guide/orientation? (central theories, concepts, key terms, authors)
- What will I be working with/on? (materials)

The following model by Rienecker/Stray (2005) shows how these questions connect to and often even depend on one another: during the writing process, you will find that if one cornerstone changes, so will another. Each of the cornerstones are equally important.

Materials

What will I be working with/on?
(e.g. documents, data, interviews, artifacts, software, tools, guidelines, handbooks, media files, case reports, etc.)

Research question

What do I want to know/ investigate? Which aspect of my topic is particularly interesting to research and write about? Why?

Your writing assignment

Central theories, concepts, key terms, authors

Which general or specific premises of your branch of study can help me analyze and understand my research object? How/why?

Method(s)

How do I intend to find an answer to my research question? (e.g. Which procedure will I use to collect and analyse data?) Which reasons support my choice?

Hypothesis

What do I expect to find out, based on the current state of research on my topic? (Note that a hypothesis should not be adjusted to match the results of the investigation at a later stage!)

Translation of this handout by Juliane Homann and Julian Maresch (studierendenWERK BERLIN). Sources:

n.a. (2016). "Planungs-Fünfeck." Schreibzentrum Europa-Universität Viadrina. URL: https://www.europa-uni.de/de/struktur/zll/institutionen/schreibzentrum/angebote/studierende/tipps-materialien/handouts/Planungsfuenfeck.pdf. Last accessed 8. Dec. 2021.

Rienecker, Lotte, Peter Stray Jorgensen and Signe Skov. (2013). *The Good Paper: A handbook for writing papers in higher education.* Frank, Andrea, Stefanie Haake and Swantje Lahm. (2007). *Schlüsselkompetenzen: Schreiben in Studium und Beruf.* Stuttgart, Weimar. Verlag J.B. Metzler.

For more information visit www.stw.berlin/schreibzentrum Contact us at schreibzentrum Schreibzentrum

