**Developing research questions**

Too many writing assignments begin with pre-determined thesis statements! For your Paper 3, you will instead begin with a research question.

Think of a topic that you already know something about, but would like to find out more about. The first step is to freewrite about this topic: why it interests you, and what you would still like to find out. Consider this freewrite by one student:

*Since I came to Hawai‘i for an exchange program, I became curious about how Japanese immigrants practice and spread their culture in Hawai‘i. Living in Hawai‘i, I’ve noticed that Japanese immigrants do assimilate to American culture and the environment, but at the same time they try to keep their tradition and culture. People cook Japanese food, celebrate holidays such as Girls’ Day and New Year, and there are preschools and Saturday School that teach children Japanese language and culture. I’d like to learn more about specific ways in which immigrant parents pass on culture from their motherland to their children, as well as how children perceive those teachings.*

The student’s last sentence already generates two research questions:

* How do Japanese-Americans in Hawaii pass on culture from Japan to their children?
* How do the children perceive those teachings?

If the student’s classmate read her freewrite, the classmate might add another research question:

* Is the attitude towards Japanese culture dependent on the generation?
  + First generation immigrants were adults when they arrived
  + Generation 1.5 immigrants arrived as children and belong to both cultures
  + Second generation Japanese-Americans were born in the U.S.
  + Then there’s the third generation, fourth generation…

What other 2 research questions can you think about concerning this topic? (Maybe the writer didn’t mention these questions, but her freewrite made you think about them.)

1.

2.

Now, freewrite for 10 minutes on a possible research topic. Instead of choosing an IELTS topic (e.g., global warming, technology), think of a topic related to one of your current classes or one of your personal interests. The topic could involve both **primary research** (interviews, field trips) as well as **secondary research** (reading information from books, articles, and the Internet).

Begin your freewrite with the sentence “I would like to explore…” Then, exchange freewrites with a partner. When you get your partner’s freewrite, read it and think of 1-3 research questions (RQs) that the freewrite seems to lead to. Write them down for the person to consider. Then talk about your suggestions with your partner. Finally, share your possible RQs with the class.