

# From Topic to Task Definition

Change your thinking! No longer should you think of your assignment as a topic!

Now we want you to think of your assignment as an “information problem” that needs solving. Whether in school or in our personal lives, we all have problems to solve, but making an *intelligent decision* requires information. The first step requires us to define exactly **what** information we need.

**Big6 Skill #1: Task Definition**

- a. Define the Information Problem (*Problem is written as an Essential Question!*)
- b. Identify the Information Needed (*These are your researchable questions!*)

Use your knowledge of good essential questions to identify the following questions as Essential, E, or Non Essential NE:

- E   What should be done to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations?
- \_\_\_\_\_ How does solar power work?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Which is a more successful company, Nike or Under Armour?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What should the government be doing to regulate the impact of chemicals on the farms, rivers and forests of our nation?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What are the current treatments for HIV and AIDS?
- \_\_\_\_\_ How can current laws regarding foster care be effectively changed to benefit the majority of foster children in the system?
- \_\_\_\_\_ How is a hero different from a celebrity?

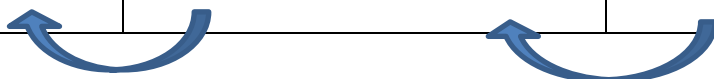
Now complete all of the TASK DEFINITION components for the following research scenarios:

1. Your health teacher has asked you to research an infectious disease for a Powerpoint presentation you will have to give to the class. You have chosen to research the “Zika virus” . To define this task accurately, complete the following steps:

- a. Establish background knowledge. What do you already know about this topic?
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_

b. Narrow your topic by filling in the following chart: [*hint: each narrowed topic should be a sub-topic of the concept that came before – see arrows*]

GENERAL	SPECIFIC (narrow topic further)	MORE SPECIFIC (how would you enter complete search phrase into a computer search?)
Zika Virus	Zika Virus and _____	Zika Virus and _____ and _____



c. State the topic in the form of an **INFORMATION PROBLEM**, in the form of an **essential question**, to be solved *[hint: read topic/form a question! Use your narrowing chart above to combine concepts into an open-ended, thought-provoking question that addresses important issues, allowing you to add new knowledge...]*

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d. Develop researchable **questions**. [What questions that you will need to answer in order to solve your “information problem.”? *[Check that these questions relate to part c., your essential question]*

i. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_

2. After reading the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, your teacher has asked you to research and write an essay about a modern social problem of your choice. You have chosen to research the problem of “Domestic Violence” To define this task accurately, complete the following steps:

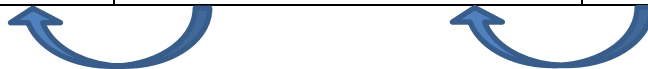
a. Establish background knowledge. What do you already know about this topic?

i. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

b. Narrow your topic by filling in the following chart: *[hint: each narrowed topic should be a sub-topic of the concept that came before – see arrows]*

GENERAL	SPECIFIC(narrow topic further)	MORE SPECIFIC (how would you enter complete search phrase into a computer search?)
Domestic Violence	Domestic Violence and _____	Domestic Violence and _____ and _____



c. State the topic in the form of an **INFORMATION PROBLEM**, in the form of an essential question, to be solved *[hint: read topic/form a question! Use your narrowing chart above to combine concepts into an open-ended, thought-provoking question that addresses important issues, allowing you to add new knowledge...]*

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d. Develop researchable **questions**. [What questions that you will need to answer in order to solve your “information problem.”? *[Check that these questions relate to part c., your essential question]*

i. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_