

IB Digital Society Extended Essay guide - Student planning sheets

Choosing a Topic

Use these questions to help you find and refine a topic.

1. **What digital technologies or platforms do I use or find interesting?** (examples: AI art generators, TikTok, Discord servers, fitness tracking apps, etc.)
2. **What social issues or phenomena am I passionate about?** (examples: mental health, political activism, economic inequality, artistic expression, etc.)
3. **How can I connect these two areas?**
4. **Applying the 3 Cs:**
 - o What Content (technology) will I investigate?
 - o Through what Concept (theoretical lens) will I analyze it?
 - o In what Context (real-world situation) will my study be located?
5. **What is my target group?** You should focus your research on a specific group of people or communities to make your research question more focused (examples: adolescents, people in retirement, Europeans, Jewish communities, Australians, etc.)
6. **Initial Research:** Do a quick search on Google Scholar. Are there academic articles on this topic? A lack of sources could be a major roadblock.
7. **Consider its Significance:** Why is this topic worthy of investigation? What are its impacts and implications for people or communities? Why does it matter? If the answers to these questions are "it doesn't/isn't", it might be best to change it.
8. **Discuss with your supervisor:** Share your ideas and get feedback on their feasibility.

Writing a Research Question

Follow these steps to move from a topic to a focused, analytical research question.

1. **Start with your topic:** (for example: Algorithmic bias in AI art)
2. **Make it specific:**
 - o **Which platform?** (Midjourney)
 - o **What kind of bias?** (Gender stereotypes)
 - o **In what context?** (Depictions of professional roles)
3. **Frame it as an analytical question:** Use command terms like “To what extent...?”, “How effectively...?”, or “In what ways...?” to encourage analysis over description.
4. **Combine the elements:** “To what extent do the training datasets of the generative AI platform Midjourney perpetuate gender stereotypes in its depiction of professional roles?”

Justifying Your Methodology

A key part of a successful EE is explaining *how* and *why* you conducted your research in a particular way. In your introduction or a dedicated methodology section, you must justify your approach.

1. **State your method clearly:** Did you use only secondary sources (literature review), or a mixed-methods approach combining secondary sources with primary research (surveys, interviews, content analysis)?
2. **Explain and justify why this method is appropriate:** How does your chosen method provide the best way to collect the evidence needed to answer your specific research question?
3. **Acknowledge the sources:** What kind of sources did you use? (examples: journals, platform policies, news articles, survey data). Why were these sources the most relevant and suitable for your investigation?
4. **Address primary research:** If you conducted primary research, you must explain how it was designed. For a survey, describe who you sampled and why. For content analysis, explain what you looked for and why. This justification is crucial for the credibility of your findings.