

**Literal Questions vs. Research Questions**

**Overview:** Because the success of your research project depends heavily on the quality of your research question, let's spend some time understanding the difference between a **literal question** (i.e. one which can be easily answered, usually by referring to the facts in a single source) and a **research question** (i.e. one which demands careful inquiry and the consultation of several—balanced—sources). As you work through this exercise, begin to think about the important differences between the two types of questions as well as how you might recognize the distinguishing characteristics of each type.

**Directions:** Look at the questions below and determine which qualify as literal questions and which qualify as research questions. Write "literal" for a question that could be easily answered by consulting a single source. Write "research" for a question which could be answered through careful inquiry and by consulting a variety of sources. In addition, a research question provides an opportunity for a student to educate his/her classmates.

1. What is the most commonly used weapon in violent crimes?
2. How many teens run away from home every year?
3. What is the curfew for kids in Oakland?
4. How do violent television shows affect the behavior of teens?
5. What are the different kinds of eating disorders?
6. What are the odds that a teenager lives in a single-parent household?
7. Is the SAT a biased test?
8. There are more children living in poverty in California than ever before. Why?
9. How does holding a job outside of school affect a teen's academic achievement?
10. How many hate crimes are committed in California each year?
11. In what major cities are gangs popular?
12. What kinds of treatments exist for depression?
13. How does a person go about finding a missing child?
14. What are some of the ways we can reduce teen pregnancy?
15. Are gender roles significant in a young person's decision to choose a profession?
16. What is the *true* cost of owning and operating a car today?
17. How has the recent prosecution of individuals with electronic music libraries affected the free exchange of music on the Internet?
18. Do the benefits of owning a pet outweigh the disadvantages?

As time allows, choose **three literal questions** and turn them into good research questions. Hint: use the research questions above to help you *rephrase the literal questions* you choose.