

## EXERCISE DELIMITATION TABLE

The Delimitation Table allows you to narrow down your topic according to certain categories and gain ideas for formulating your question.

A research question is a central element of your academic work.

A good research question is...

- framed as an actual question
- clearly identifiable as a question (with sub-questions if necessary)
- short and concise
- interesting to you as an author
- relevant to the topic
- controversial
- an opportunity to formulate and prove a thesis
- clearly visible in the introduction to your academic paper

A bad research question is...

- easy to answer because you can simply look it up or answer it by quoting a source
- unfalsifiable because the answer is obvious or a question of taste
- impossible to prove because no data is available or cannot be collected on this topic
- too extensive because it is impossible to deal with the most important sources and aspects within the given time or scope

### 1) Instructions

Look at the example to understand what the individual delimitation criteria mean.

Then fill out the delimitation table. You do not have to fill it out in the given order, nor do you have to find something for every item.

Example topic: "Burnout as a result of capitalism?"

Delimitation criteria	Concrete possibilities of delimitation
Selected aspect(s)	burnout of managers  Managers in businesses / banks
Time Frame	age of managers  period of study
Spatial frame (Towns, countries, institutions...)	in Hamburg in Europe  In rural regions
Establish a focus/ Paying particular attention to...	...Capitalism and lifestyle?  ...Job/private life...
Groups of people	Banker in Europe
Disciplinary aspects and research methods	Capitalism theories/ socio-psychological investigation for statistical comparison  Qualitative examination
Narrowing of sources	Only German  Literature published after 2000  Specific research areas, for example research pertaining to a critique of capitalism, research on burnout  Interviews with experts
Theoretical approaches Authors	Psychoanalysis  Paying special attention to paper XY
Relationships/ establish comparisons	In comparison to healthy managers  In comparison to other cultures
Individual case/ Emphasise example	Case study
Highlight something new	Modern explanatory approaches (burnout)  Latest research results on the topic (Capitalis- m/ burnout)
Only provide an overview	Historical review  Overview of the current research
Indicate practical relevance	Case examples  Relevance for corporate management

My topic:

Delimitation criteria	Concrete possibilities of delimitation
Chosen aspect(s)	
Time Frame	
Spatial frame (Towns, countries, institutions...)	
Establish a focus/ Paying particular attention to...	
Groups of people	
Disciplinary aspects and research methods	
Narrowing of sources	
Theoretical approaches Authors	
Relationships/ establish comparisons	
Individual case/ emphasise example	
Highlight something new	
Only provide an overview	
Indicate practical relevance	

## 2) Further Steps

These questions can help you to continue working with the completed delimitation table:

- For which criterion could you write the most?
- Which criteria did you find important, but found hard to complete?
- What exactly did you mean by XY?
- What could be the focus of your topic?
- Which delimitation criteria could be combined? What do you think belongs together?

After filling out the table, you can...

- Deepen a specific aspect using a cluster (see handout clustering) or freewriting (see handout freewriting)
- Draft an initial outline
- Develop a preliminary research question
- Narrow down your question further using the three-step method (see handout three-step)
- Note down keywords for your research

In dependence on:

Grieshammer, Ella, et al. Zukunftsmodell Schreibberatung: Eine Anleitung zur Begleitung von Schreibenden im Studium. Hohen-  
gehren: Schneider Verlag, 2016.

Handout of the Writing Centre of TH Nürnberg

Concept: Writing Centre of TU Dresden, 2016.

Further information on our support services, writing advice, workshops, writing marathon, etc. on our website: [www.tu-dresden.de/deinstudienerfolg/szd](http://www.tu-dresden.de/deinstudienerfolg/szd)