



The Ad Hoc Survey

At the start of a writing project, you need to find a suitable topic. To do this, you read up and gather ideas in your lectures and seminars. Talking to others is also helpful. While lecturers or fellow students can help you with expertise from your discipline, talking to people outside your subject can provide with a valuable external perspective. This is what the ad hoc survey is for:

Name your broad topic as it is at the moment. What are the central keywords? Ask at least two different people about it – students of different subjects, people of different ages, from inside our outside the university ... They should answer your questions spontaneously and casually, there is no right or wrong answer. The external perspective is intended to help you come up with ideas that you would not have had on your own. Ask a maximum of ten simple questions and write down the answers in bullet points. Questions can be:

1. What is the first thing you think of when you hear _____ ?

2. Where have you last encountered the topic _____ ?

3. Which questions do you have when you hear the topic _____ ?

4. What is your opinion about it?

5. How do you think the topic is perceived by the general public?

6. _____ ?

7. _____ ?

The idea and the instructions for the ad hoc survey were drawn from the Bremer Schreibcoach (Modul C4):
Krings, Hans P. (2012): Der Bremer Schreibcoach. Ratgeber für wissenschaftliches Schreiben im Studium und darüber hinaus. Bremen, p. 80.
Translation from German by Stefanie Everke Buchanan.

