About Research Methodology

To begin, what is research methodology?

Research methodology is an opportunity for you as the researcher to clearly explain exactly how your paper will be organized, the methods and measures you use, and why you did so. Plus, it's used in four separate categories to grade your paper, under research, analysis, evaluation, and communication.

In this manner, research methodology differs greatly from AS to A level. In AS, your primary methodology is more or less set before you. You have two sides with one to two reasons for each perspective, countries that support them, and examples to reinforce them all. Many of AS papers are standardized in this format to give you as researchers a good starting point on how to properly organize your research into an argument. Plus, the word count of 2000 limits your abilities.

Let's go over some examples to clearly demonstrate this.

Example AS questions typically are very clearly divided into the perspectives of "yes" and "no" such as:

- Is fashion killing you?
- Should vaccines be mandatory for all?
- Are flowers necessary in today's world?

   These all very clearly have a yes and a no side. Yes, fashion is killing you, or no fashion is not. Very cut and dry. You'd typically approach these questions only from that angle.

Now in A level, you are expected to be at a much greater point that you can expand and innovate from that simplistic format. Often your question will demand such a thing to occur, and you have 3000 more words than before to explore those possibilities.

With a word count of 5000 words and your abilities as a researcher, you can create and explore many complex questions. Some may be specific and local, like "Is the FDA protecting America?" Some may be broad and arbitrary, like "Is patriotism fueling hate?" And still some may be entirely based in theory, like "Is economic freedom tied to economic growth?" None of these three can be approached in the same way. A topic on the FDA would obviously be US specific, but if a topic on patriotism was you would get points off for limiting yourself to just one country. Likewise, patriotism differs for each person. You would need to define what patriotism is in the terms of your paper so that readers can clearly understand why you made the arguments you did. Economic freedom being based in economics would require a clear way to measure itself, or else the paper would be entirely based in theory.

Example A level questions can be divided similarly into "yes" or "no" but may have grey areas in between, or even require entirely new ways to look at them. Perhaps there's terminology that can entirely change the question. For example:

- Is the FDA protecting America?
  - o You can approach this from multiple angles. Yes, they are. No, they are not. Yes, they are, however their approach is limited. No, they are not because they are too weak. The answer entirely depends on how you define protection. A strong central FDA may

protect America medicinally, but would increase government size and restrict freedoms. A weak FDA may encourage American drug companies to innovate and create new medicine, but this may be at the cost of weak regulation that could harm citizens. If you did not explain how you will go about answering the question, it may lead to readers confusing your arguments with each other.

- Is patriotism fueling hate?
    - o Yes, it is. No, it isn't. It hasn't in the past, but it is now. Yes, but only in certain countries. Yes, but only in certain groups. Patriotism is an abstract term and different for each person. You would need to define what patriotism is or else each person would approach this paper with a different definition in mind, then your chosen arguments run the risk of making little sense under their personal definition.
- Is economic freedom tied to economic growth?
    - o The wording of the question makes it clear that the arguments would be "yes there is a tie" and "no there is not." This differs from the others because it is based in economics and numbers. Unlike the other two questions that rely on examples and evidence with multiple possible answers, a question based in math can only be two answers. (i.e. 1+1 is only equal to 2 and not 3 or 4 or anything in between.) However, you need a clear way to measure how freedom is tied. Freedom is another arbitrary term that needs a definition, but once you have one you also need to figure a way on how to measure something that almost refuses to be measured.

A lot of what I just said may be confusing. You won't entirely understand until you start researching and run into the problem of how to explain your brilliant ideas to others. But typically, what I see that works best in a methodology is:

1. Any unclear or theoretical terms are clearly defined to the reader

2. How the paper is to be structured is mentioned

3. Any tactic or measurement you use to explain your broad arguments is mentioned

4. Any limits you created are mentioned

5. The methodology is precise and clear that anyone can pick it up and immediately understand how, why, and where your paper is going.

When you conclude, your findings should be sensible and understandable because your reader knows exactly how you reached this conclusion thanks to your methodology.

The paper at a whole requires a broad methodology that will be placed in your intro. This is the one I made for the economic question.

> *First, some parameters must be set. It must be understood that "freedom" is an incredibly broad term and must be simplified to make it reasonable. To be clear, while the term "freedom" might be misleading it is the best way to properly characterize the ideas of opportunity, free enterprise, and liberty without repeating those and other words like them over and over again. Economic freedom will be defined as the freedom for individuals to make*

personal economic decisions in society. Governments of that society should allow the free trade of capital and goods only intervening to protect and preserve that freedom. While the latter may sound like the antithesis of the former, it must be understood that in a practical world pure freedom does not exist. Government intervenes to ensure freedom grows while not overly restricting it; an easy example being monopolization. The importance of this definition is to make it clear economic freedom is different from political freedom, social freedom, religious freedom, etc. While they interconnect at some points, they do have key differences that separate them. This paper will consider them to be totally different to make clarification easy.

The research methodology for the paper will involve several different perspectives and attempting to find adequate measures for them to compare to growth. Essentially, we must find a middleman between freedom and growth; if there is no middleman there is no tie, if there is than we can compare the data to determine connection.

I wrote a lot on this in my intro because I knew that a lot of people are typically confused about economic matters, even I could be sometimes. It served not only as direction for readers, but also to me. I wanted to be very clear on how this paper was going to go, and to make sure that I limited myself so I could fit under 5000 words

Each lens/perspective usually benefits from one at the beginning.

Now to begin, it is crucial to address the impact of government as it is viewed as the lender or benefactor of freedom; it can give and can take away. Therefore, the logic follows that if we can tie freedom to a specific pattern of government, then we can view the economic growth of that pattern and see if there is a correlation of economic freedom to growth. The methodology for this perspective will include several steps. First, we must acknowledge the most believed measure of freedom, that being size of government (SoG). Than we will show critiques and attacks to this belief. If SoG proves to be the best measure than it can be cross referenced with economic growth to show a possible tie. If it is proven to be a false measure, then we'll explore separate theories of government to find a clear measure. Upon finding this new measure, it will be cross referenced with economic growth data.

This was what was at the beginning of my 1st lens/perspective. Even though I mentioned what I was going to do in the intro, I still wanted to remind people of that, so they didn't get lost halfway through the paper. This practice greatly benefits you in your 2nd and 3rd lens/perspective when your intro was read ten minutes ago and is starting to fade from readers memories.

Now, these examples are based on my research, tailored to my paper, and specific only to my question. The way I made my methodology would never work for a question on patriotism or the FDA. But if I treated all three of these questions the same, readers may understand one of them, but would be lost in the other two. Therefore, you're making a methodology. This is one of the rare times you can talk with your reader and show off how smart your work is. Savor it. Mine wasn't perfect, (they were too theoretical at times) but the reader knew that going on, so the paper as a whole made sense to them.

Hope this helps!