



Investigating an Issue

Students can get bogged down with details and need help sorting out thinking processes. These Tip Sheets should help students visualize their thinking and learning as they progress through the investigation process. The three stages of investigating an issue are outlined in basic steps and questions. The Tip Sheets then map students' thinking patterns to help them "see" their thinking and work through the steps of putting their thoughts together. The graphic organizer helps students record and organize thoughts as they investigate issues by discovering and defining the issue, writing an issue statement for investigation, delving deep into the issue and its related problems, and responding to the issue.

This thinking skill includes these resources:

- Investigating an Issue, Text Outline*
- Investigating an Issue, Discovering and Defining an Issue, Student Tip Sheet*
- Investigating an Issue, Delving Deep Into the Issue, Student Tip Sheet*
- Investigating an Issue, Responding to the Issue, Student Tip Sheet*
- Investigating an Issue, Graphic Organizer*

Investigating an Issue

Tip Sheet

Stage 1: Discover and Define the Issue

1. **Discovering an Issue:** What makes an issue?

- A concept or idea that experts do not agree upon. Do experts agree?
- An idea where different sources of information have different interpretations or views. Do different sources of information all have the same views?
- A prediction by an expert that differs widely from other experts. Do experts think the same thing will or should happen?

2. **Defining the Issue:** What is the issue I want to investigate?

Write a very focused **Issue Statement** that clearly states your issue. This **Issue Statement** should be an open-ended question that may be revised throughout your investigation process.

Examples of **Issue Statements** might be:

- What is the controversy over the greenhouse effect and the resulting global warming?
- What would happen if genetic engineering continues in its current practices?
- What would be the effect of uninterrupted urban growth suggested by "the tragedy of the commons?"
- What is the future of water quality with the presence of emerging contaminants?

3. Test your **Issue Statement** with these questions:

- Are there multiple answers to the question?
- Do experts disagree?
- Are there several sources of information that have different theories?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, you are ready to begin investigating.

Stage 2: Delve Deep Into the Issue

4. First find out the basics of your issue.

- What do I know already about this problem or question?
- What do I need to know to effectively address this problem or question?
- What are the important features?
- What are the defining characteristics?
- What resources can I access to determine a proposed solution or hypothesis?

5. Now dig in and find out some things about your issue.

- What do I already know?
- What are the basic facts?
- Who is involved?
- Where does it take place?
- What happened?
- What does it look like?

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Tip Sheet

6. You're ready to dig deeper and find out what makes your issue so "hot." What makes it an issue?
 - What are the concerns about it?
 - What are the controversies?
 - Why are people involved?
 - Why did it happen?
 - What are the dangers/risks?
 - What are the benefits/advantages?
 - What may happen if...?
 - What can happen if...?

7. What should I look for when investigating?
 - Find a rich diversity of perspectives.
 - Find several different types of sources of information.
 - Evaluate the sources.
 - How current?
 - How credible?
 - How accurate?
 - How biased?

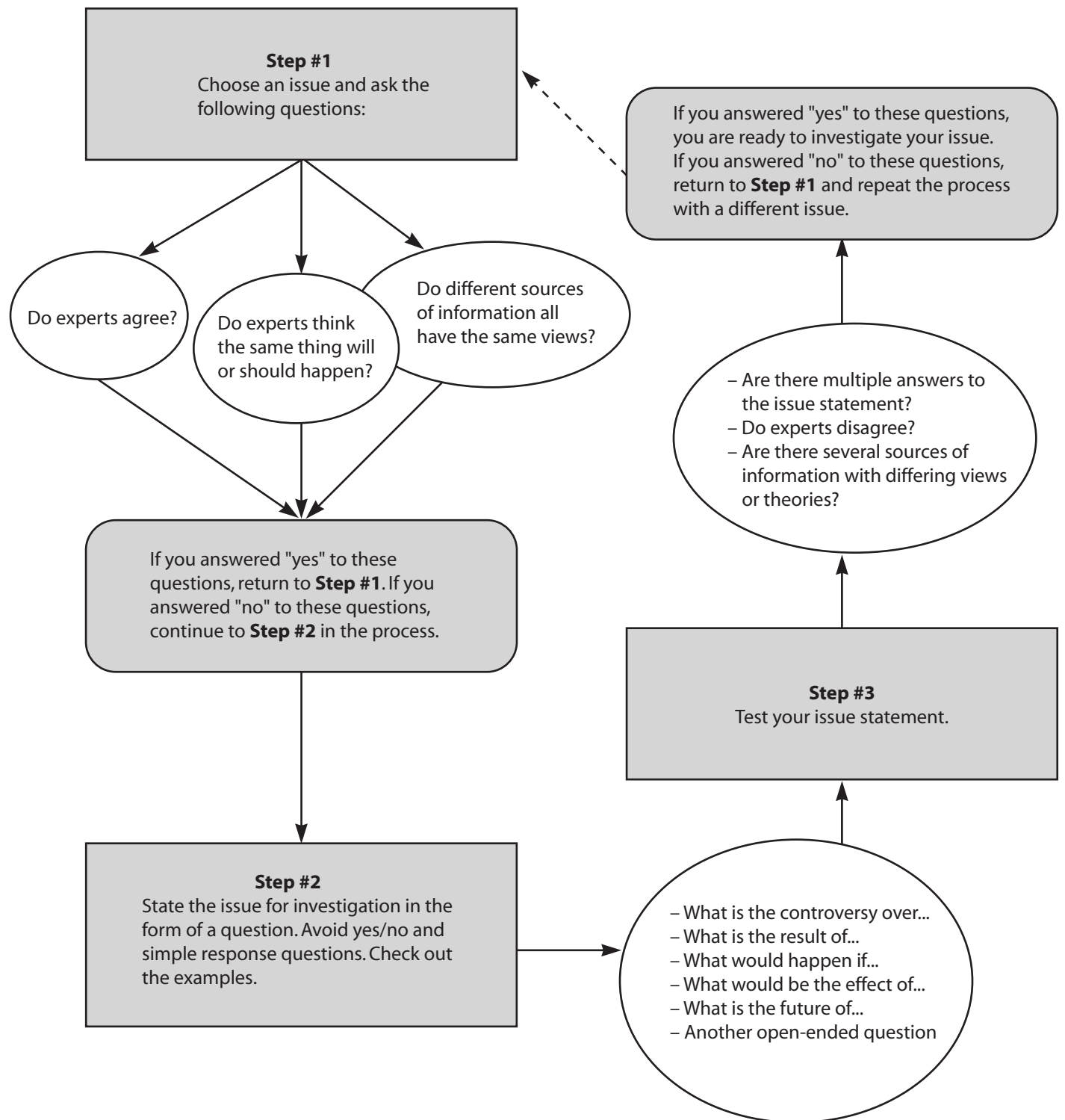
Stage 3: Respond to the Issue

8. What do I think about the issue now that I have investigated it thoroughly?
 - With whom do I agree ? Disagree?
 - What can I suggest to clear up the controversy?
 - How can I respond to questions or concerns?

9. How do I want to explain my answer to the issue question?
 - Do I focus on my issue question?
 - Do I reorganize the information in new ways and consider diverse perspectives?
 - Do I construct a solution or answer to my issue statement?

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Stage 1: Discovering and Defining an Issue



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Stage 2: Delving Deep into the Issue

Step #4
Find out the basics of your issue.

- What do I know already about this problem or question?
- What do I need to know to effectively address this problem or question?
- What are the important features?
- What are the defining characteristics?
- What resources can I access to determine a proposed solution or hypothesis?

Step #5
Dig in and find out more about your issue.

- What do I already know?
- What are the basic facts?
- Who is involved?
- Where does it take place?
- What happened?
- What does it look like?

Step #7
What should I look for when investigating?

- Find a rich diversity of perspectives
- Find several different types of sources of information
- Evaluate the sources
 - How current
 - How credible
 - How accurate
 - How biased

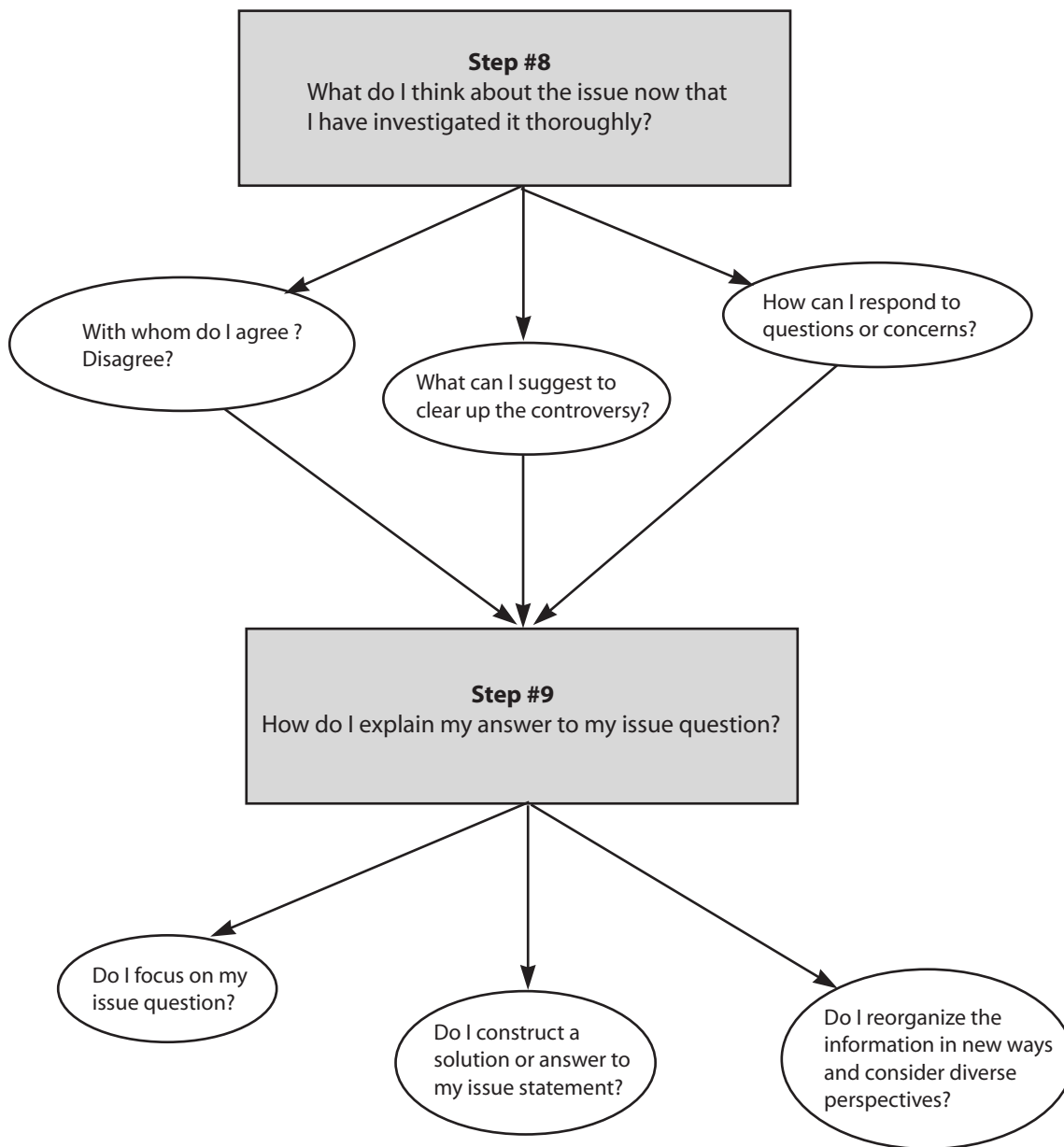
Keep this in mind while working through the steps

Step #6
What makes your issue so "hot"?

- What are the concerns about it?
- What are the controversies?
- Why are people involved?
- Why did it happen?
- What are the dangers/risks?
- What are the benefits/advantages?
- What may happen if...?
- What can happen if...?

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Stage 3: Responding to the Issue



I'm ready to respond!

I have written an issue statement.

I have thoroughly investigated the issue.

I have my thoughts and ideas ready, and I know how I want to explain them.



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 Graphic Organizer

NAME _____ DATE _____

DIRECTIONS: Use the space below to record information and thoughts about your issue statement. Keep in mind that the information you record will be "messy" with contradictions and controversies, and you will have several thoughts and responses to this conflicting information.

My Issue Statement:

Known / Agreed Upon Facts

Concerns / Contradictions / Controversies

This is what I think about the issue.

This is my response to the issue statement.