

The Research Process



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July 6, 2006

Performing research is a large part of life for students and for many professionals. It can also be daunting. If you think of the process in terms of steps to follow, it may be easier for you to get started. Also, on the back of this page is a flowchart that can help you visualize these steps.

Step 1 – Choose Your Topic

Choose a topic you are not overly familiar with and have not written about before; this will make the assignment more interesting. Also consider choosing a topic from your major.

Step 2 – Create Your Search Strategy

This involves determining the type of information you need and selecting the tools you need to locate the information.

Step 3 – Locate Materials

Look in the online library catalog first. Then use our online databases to search for articles on your topic. Remember you can use Interlibrary Loan to request items we do not have here. *After* all this, check the Internet. Be cautious in using this information.

Step 4 – Gather Information

Copy or print out articles and check out any books you need. Remember, you need a current ID to check out books.

Step 5 – Evaluate Information

This involves really thinking about what you've found: Is it *about* your topic? Is it too simple or too complex? Is it by someone who has authority in the field? Is it biased one way or the other? Is it recent enough? Who published it? Don't forget to ask these questions and more. You don't want to use bad information.

Step 6 – Write and Cite

Writing the paper is up to you. Ask your instructor if you have any questions about form or content. Citing your sources is *very* important; you don't want to be guilty of plagiarism. And you also want people to be able to see where you got your information and how well-researched your paper is. Use your style manual to create your bibliography to ensure it's done correctly. And ask your instructor if you need assistance.

