

The Research Process

1) Define a research question/topic

- a) What is your idea for a topic?
- b) Find background information to help develop and narrow topic. Is it a "researchable" idea?
- c) Narrow/Define your topic, using concepts like TIME, LOCATION, SUBJECT AREA, PROBLEM/QUESTION, etc.

2) Define your information needs

- a) How long does the paper need to be? Who is your audience?
- b) Do you need to use certain types of resources (such as primary sources, historic materials, scholarly or popular resources, etc.)?
- c) Are books useful resources for your topic?
- d) Are journal articles useful for your topic? Do you need to use scholarly material?
- e) Is web material appropriate for your research?

3) Develop a research strategy and search for information

- a) Where will you find the materials you need (and defined in step 2)? Are there any subject-specific library databases you should consider?
- b) Brainstorm search terms:
 - i) Break down your topic into smaller concepts
 - ii) Identify synonyms for these concepts
- c) Using your key terms and concepts, create efficient search strings:
 - i) Remember to use AND, OR, and NOT
 - ii) Remember to use truncation and quotation marks
- d) Search library databases, catalogs, and web sites for sources for your paper.
 - i) Remember that a quality research paper uses a variety of resources.
 - ii) Remember that you may have to revise your search strings as you go along.
- e) Do you need to borrow materials from other libraries to complete your research? Use Sage's inter-library loan service or your DAP card.

4) Evaluate the resources you find

- a) Use the TRAP evaluation criteria to evaluate any resource you've located.
- b) Do any facts, statistics or quotations need to be verified in another source?

5) Organize and write your paper; citing the information you use

- a) Take notes from your resources, being careful to note citation information and paraphrasing appropriately.
- b) Create and follow an outline.
- c) Write your paper, citing your sources appropriately.
 - i) What citation style have you been asked to use, or is appropriate for your subject matter?

REMEMBER: All of these steps may not fit your particular assignment. Use them as guidelines, and remember that you may revisit some of these steps several times as you refine and update your research. You may also complete the steps in a slightly different order.

Also, keep an eye on the time you have to complete your assignment. Consider creating a timeline or schedule for each component (or deliverable) of your project.