
Library research can sometimes be overwhelming. The following steps may help you get started with your research as well as provide tips on successful research.

steps in the research process

➤ 1: Getting Started & Choosing Your Topic

- ◆ Review your assignment to make sure you understand it and ask your instructor to clarify anything that is unclear to you.
- ◆ Brainstorm to make a list of several broad (general) topics that interest you and meet the requirements of your assignment.
- ◆ Check the Library to see if there are enough resources available to adequately develop your topic.
- ◆ State your topic as a question and then write down the main concepts or keywords from your question (Don't forget to list synonyms to your keywords!).

➤ 2: Selecting Resources

Background Information

- ◆ Finding background information is important because it introduces you to a topic and will provide you with any unique terminology related to your topic.
- ◆ Good places to look for background information: encyclopedias, dictionaries, and textbooks.

Narrowing Your Topic – Sometimes your topic covers too much material. Here are some suggestions on narrowing down your topic:

- ◆ What do you already know about this subject? Is there a specific time period you want to cover? Is there a geographic region or country on which you would like to focus? Is there a particular aspect of this topic that interests you?
- ◆ When searching in online databases, use AND and NOT to narrow your search. (e.g., children AND divorce)

Broadening Your Topic – Sometimes your topic doesn't cover enough information or material. Here are some suggestions on broadening your topic:

- ◆ Examine other countries, regions, or states. Think more broadly about your topic. Who are some key players? What are some other issues in your topic?
- ◆ When searching in online databases, use OR to broaden your search. (e.g., automobiles OR transportation)

➤ 3: Finding Materials

Materials for your research can be found in the Library using a variety of means: books, magazines, journals, videos, and/or the Internet, etc. For additional information, see the handout "Selecting the Right Source".

Books & Videos

- ◆ Finding books or videos can be done using the Library's website <<http://dabcc-www.nmsu.edu/library>> and selecting Online Catalog. The catalog includes materials that are located at the DABCC Library, the NMSU Libraries, and NMSU-Alamogordo Library.

Periodical Articles

- ◆ Periodical articles can be from magazines, newspapers, technical journals or newsletters.

- ◆ Periodical articles can be located by using the Library's website <<http://dabcc-www.nmsu.edu/library>>, selecting Article Databases, and choosing one or more of the resources (ProQuest, LexisNexis, Health Reference Center, etc...).

Internet Resources

- ◆ Use search engines and subject directories to locate materials on the Web. For a good start, use the *Search* icon on your Web browser.
- ◆ You should critically evaluate all Internet resources that you find (see the handout "Evaluating Web Sources").

➤ **4: Evaluating Sources**

Evaluating your information is important for all your sources (not just Internet sources!). Some things to think about:

- ◆ Quantity – Do you have enough information? Have you included a variety of points of view?
- ◆ Diversity – Include different types of resources (books, magazines, Internet, etc.).
- ◆ Date of Publication – Depends on your topic. (e.g., current event topics, medical topics, legal topics, etc., should have current resources)
- ◆ Reliability – What is the purpose of publication? Is information biased? What assumptions are made?

➤ **5: Writing Your Paper & Formatting Your Bibliography**

The Library has a number of books that may help you in writing your paper and putting together your bibliography. The Library also has handouts to assist you in formatting your bibliography, reference list, or works cited page (see handouts on "Using APA Citation Style" or "Using MLA Citation Style"). Ask your instructor for guidance on which citation style to use.