

Recipe for Research

A 9-step Process for Acquiring & Organizing Information for Your Research Assignment



BEFORE YOU START

1. WRITE A TOPIC OVERVIEW

What do you **already know** about your topic? Write it down. All of it. This will give you a place to begin and an idea of how much work is ahead of you.

2. DEFINE YOUR TASK(S)

What are the **requirements** of the project? In other words, what are the necessary **ingredients** for you to achieve success? Examples may include one or more of the following:

- a. Fact Finding (gathering and presenting information)
- b. Information Analysis (examining, interpreting and explaining information)
- c. Persuasion (influencing your audience to view information as you do)
- d. Problem Solving (presenting information about a crisis and its resolution)

3. FORMULATE QUESTIONS

- a. Make a list of research questions that will give your project **direction**.

Example: What are the primary causes of **global warming**?

- b. Use your questions to make a list of keywords.

These can be used later when you start your research, especially with online resources.

Note: Use your key words to make a list of **synonyms** as well as related, broader, and narrower search terms.

Example: The key word or term in the example question is **global warming**. A synonym would be **greenhouse effect** and a related term might be **ozone depletion**.

4. SET GOALS

- a. Keeping your tasks and questions in mind, determine what you hope to **accomplish** with your project or paper.

- i. What do you want your audience to learn from the information you are presenting?
- ii. What is the best way to present that information?

- b. Using your keywords and research questions, develop a **thesis statement**. You will refer back to this statement throughout the process of completing your project.

Example: A study of global warming shows that the causes are both naturally occurring and man-made.

RESEARCH

5. SELECT YOUR RESOURCES

- a. Figure out **which materials** are going to work best for your project. Options include: Online research databases like those offered by EBSCO (*MAS Ultra*, *History Reference Center*, *Science Reference Center*) as well as books, reference books, dictionaries, magazines, newspapers, audio and video files and search engines.

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Note: EBSCO databases include **all** of the resource options covered above except for search engines. Ask your librarian for **login information** or, if you know your User ID and Password, go to <http://search.ebscohost.com>.

- b. Determine the **pros and cons** of your resource choices.
 - i. Which include the most information?
 - ii. Which are the most accurate?
 - iii. Which are easiest to use?
 - iv. Which are fastest?

Example: Search engines are fairly simple to use, but results often lack accuracy and finding reputable sources can be difficult and time consuming.

6. GATHER INFORMATION

Read, watch and/or listen to **everything** you've collected.

7. EVALUATE YOUR INFORMATION

This is the time to **make sure** your information meets the requirements you defined in steps 2 through 4.

- c. Will it help you to complete your tasks?
- d. Does your research answer all or most of your questions?
- e. Will your research allow you to attain your goals and prove the points in your thesis statement?

Note: If the answer to any of these questions is "no," you may need to do more research, review your information to find more answers, or weed out information that will not be helpful.

8. COORDINATE YOUR INFORMATION

- f. **Organize** and repackage your information in an outline.
- g. Write a rough draft.
- h. Ask someone you trust to help edit your draft. A second pair of eyes is invaluable.

9. PRODUCE YOUR FINAL PRODUCT

Whether the final product is a research paper, editorial, dramatic presentation, audio/video production, art project, oral report, debate or any other project, if you **carefully** followed steps 1 through 8, you have already improved your odds of success!

For more helpful information regarding research, visit www.ebscohost.com/success_center.