research basics

Develop Research Plan

Understand your assignment
- How long is it?
- When is it due?
- Does it require specific types of resources?

What to do
- Determine a focused, clear, and manageable topic
- Develop a realistic overall plan and timeline to complete the research project.

Helpful Resources
- Research help books
- Online research guides
- Assignment Calculator
  http://ac.codlibrary.org
- Writing Center
  http://www.cod.edu/write

Do Background Research

Scholarly research is about building on the ideas and research of others and integrating these ideas with your own.

What to do
- Explore general information resources to become familiar with the topic.
- Identify key concepts and terms that describe the topic.
- Take notes.

Set a Search Strategy

Is your topic manageable?
- Is it too broad?
- Is it too narrow?
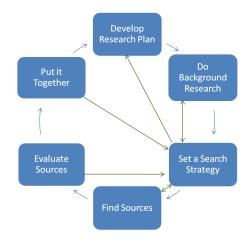
Are you asking the right questions?
- Is your topic researchable?
- Does it meet the requirements of your assignment?

What to do
- Identify key concepts and terms that describe the topic.
- Narrow or broaden the scope of the topic based on preliminary research.

Helpful Resources for Every Stage
- Your instructor— use your instructor's office hours; check-in at different stages of your research; ask questions
- The Library— visit the Reference Desk; make an appointment with a Librarian; call, email or IM the Library

Find Sources

Before you begin searching, look at your assignment and ask yourself:
- How many sources do I need?
- What types of sources do I need?
- Are there any sources I cannot use?
- Does the information need to be current? How current?
- Do I need statistics or other data?

What to do
- Determine available resources and services at the College of DuPage Library
- Understand the characteristics and value of different types of resources (books, periodicals, Web sites) and their different formats (print, electronic).
- Select information resources (catalog, databases, search engines) appropriate for the research topic.
- Use various search techniques such as keywords, controlled vocabulary, limiters, Boolean operators, and truncation to find relevant items.

Helpful Resources
- Subject Research Guides
  http://www.cod.edu/library/research/
- Research FAQs
  http://www.cod.edu/library/research/faq.htm

Evaluate Sources

What are you looking for?
- Information that is useful to your research
- Information that is credible, unbiased, timely and correct

What to do
- Use the components of a citation to choose the most suitable sources for your research project.
- Evaluate sources to determine reliability, validity, authority, currency, and accuracy.
- Evaluate information sources with an understanding of context, intention, and audience (bias, opinion, satire, inflammatory, balanced).

Put it Together

Know when to cite
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Quoting

Know how to cite
- Use the appropriate format: APA, MLA, Chicago Style
- In-text citations and bibliographies/work cited lists

What to do
- Extract the details and concepts from the retrieved sources.
- Organize the gathered information in a logical and useful manner.
- Understand what constitutes plagiarism and do not represent work attributable to others as your own.
- Select a documentation style and use it consistently to cite sources

Helpful Resources
- Library's Citing Sources page
  http://www.cod.edu/library/research/citenet.htm
- NoodleBib
- SOS workshops on APA and MLA citing

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