



## Step 5: Conducting Research

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### The Writing Center

Many papers require research to support points or just to be familiar with a topic. This worksheet will help you determine exactly what information you need for your project. Planning before beginning your research will save time and will improve the quality of your sources.

### Preparing to Research

1. Make a timeline and set goals. How long will it take you to locate sources, read (not just skim) and highlight them, and incorporate them into your paper? Hint: it usually takes longer than you think! When do you want to have your research completely finished?

Time needed to complete research:

Research should be completed by this date:

2. Are there any instructor restrictions or requirements on research? List them here.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Review your outline from Step 4. Did you determine what information you need for your paper? If not, spend some time on it now. It is much easier and less time consuming if you think about what you need rather than trying to read everything on your topic. Make a list of the information you need to find.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Write a list of search terms. Search terms are key words and phrases you will use to search for sources; list as many as you can. You may also want to think of related topics and search for those as well. (Example: Topic = death penalty; search terms = death penalty, capital punishment, execution, Amnesty International, etc.)

Keep in mind that it is sometimes very difficult to find the exact information for which you are searching. You may have to find similar information and then make a connection between that and your topic. (Example: you can't find information on death penalty cases in your county. Search for cases in other counties and then explain how they could be related.)

## Conducting Research

5. Start searching! Use as many of the search terms as necessary to find what you need. Remember to ask the librarians for help.
6. Skim titles, abstracts, and introductions to get an idea of whether a source will work for your paper. Print or bookmark those sources.
7. Once you have selected a source, read it carefully once. Then, read it again and evaluate it. (Check your handbook for more information.) You can also use the criteria listed here to decide if the source is credible enough for your paper.
  - a. Relevance: Does the source relate well to your paper? Can you use it effectively?
  - b. Author: Is the person an expert in the field? In other words, does he/she know what he/she is talking about?
  - c. Date: Is the article recent? Is the information up to date?
  - d. Publisher: Is the publisher well known? Is it biased in any way? What is the quality of the items it publishes (i.e. The Inquirer vs. The Wall Street Journal)?
  - e. Bias: Is anything about the source biased? Does it recognize opposing views to give the reader a good picture of the entire issue?
  - f. Length: Does the source cover and explain enough aspects of the topic?
  - g. Sources: Does the source cite other research? Is the source based entirely on the author's opinion?
  - h. Tone: Does the source have an appropriate academic tone?
  - i. Intent: Is the source trying to accomplish something other than giving information (like selling something)? Example: .com vs. .edu
8. Once you have answered these questions, you should give the source a grade (A-F). Write it at the top of the first page. You should only use the very best sources in your paper.
9. Print or photocopy all sources you think you want to use. It takes a lot of paper, but it will save you a lot of time. Make sure you have printed all the information you will need to complete the source sheets.
10. Prepare a source sheet for each of your sources. We recommend the items on the attached page; you can make copies if you want. These items will make sure that you have all the necessary information to correctly cite your sources. (**See the Step 8 worksheet!**) You should fill out a sheet for each source you use. Note: skip any items that do not apply to your source.

**Source Sheet**

Author(s) of source: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title of article or selection: \_\_\_\_\_  
Book title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place book was published: \_\_\_\_\_  
Book publisher: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year of publication: \_\_\_\_\_  
Magazine, newspaper, or journal title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Volume: \_\_\_\_\_  
Issue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pages: \_\_\_\_\_  
Database name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Database subscription provider: \_\_\_\_\_  
Library used: \_\_\_\_\_  
Library location (city, state): \_\_\_\_\_  
Date you accessed the source: \_\_\_\_\_  
URL: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of source:

How source could be used in paper:

Important quotes (list page numbers):

Works Cited citation:

Parenthetical citation:

11. Read the source again very carefully, taking notes in the margins and highlighting portions you would like to use in your paper.

### **Incorporating Research into the Paper**

Hint: Look up the answers in your handbook and write notes below. Use the index and table of contents to find the information.

12. What strategies can you use to incorporate the research you have found into your paper?
13. In your paper, how do you let the reader know you have used outside information?
14. Which sources will you summarize or paraphrase? Be sure to include parenthetical citations for each. You may want to highlight these on the sources and include the parenthetical citations.
15. Which sources will you directly quote? You may want to highlight these on the sources and include the parenthetical citations.
16. What information should be given with direct quotes so they are not drop quotes? In other words, what attribution is necessary?
17. How can you smoothly incorporate evidence (summary, paraphrase, and direct quote) into your paragraphs?
18. Is it a good idea to start or end paragraphs with evidence? What should come before and after evidence in a paragraph?