The research process
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One important factor in doing college level research is thinking about and using the steps in the research process. Illustrated here is a diagram of a simple outline students can use to expand their search options and improve their research results. The steps illustrated in this process can be repeated or reordered, depending on your research needs.

1. The first step is **investigating**. This involves identifying what it is you need to research, understanding the parameters of your assignment, and stating your research need as either a focused research question or thesis statement.

2. The second step is **searching**. In this step, you’ll choose keywords from your research topic, formulate search statements, and use these in catalogs and databases to find books and articles on your topic.

3. The next step is **locating** the information that you’ve identified using your search tools in libraries or on the Web. You will use a variety of library services and collections to help you find your sources.

4. Once you obtain the information you need, the next step is **evaluating** the quality of that information.

5. As you use the information, you will give credit to the sources by **documenting** them with proper citations.

6. The final step is **utilizing** the information for a specific purpose. This might be a paper, speech, presentation, or research project. In this step, you will communicate what you found to a particular audience.
Identify a research topic
Understand assignment parameters
State topic as a focused research question or thesis statement

Choose keywords
Formulate search statements
Search in catalogs and databases to find books and articles on your topic
Search in Web search engines to find relevant material on the Web

Locate information in library or on the Web

Evaluate quality of information found

Document resources
Give credit with proper citations

Utilize information for paper, speech, presentation, or research project
Communicate what you found to a particular audience