The research process
THE RESEARCH PROCESS

One important factor in doing college level research is thinking about and using the components 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. It is important to note that the research process is not simply a series of steps that you follow in a particular order. The components illustrated in this process may be repeated or reordered, depending on your research needs and the results you retrieve.

1. The first component 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 next component is **searching**. Here, 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. Sometimes, if you are either not finding enough - or finding too much - information, you’ll re-investigate and revise your question or thesis again.

3. The next component 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. If, after looking them over, you decide that you still need more information (or different information), you’ll search again to find other sources.

4. Once you obtain the information you need, you’ll **evaluate** the quality of that information. Sometimes when you get to this stage, you might realize that the information you found is not adequate. Perhaps the sources are not in agreement, or maybe you question their credibility. In this case, you’ll go back to search and locate additional sources on your topic.

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

6. The final component is **utilizing** the information for a specific purpose. This might be a paper, speech, presentation, or research project. Here, you will communicate what you found to a particular audience. Even at this stage, as you begin synthesizing what you found and begin writing, you may see the need to find additional information to fill in missing pieces, which will require you to search, locate, evaluate, and document additional sources.
Choose keywords
Formulate search statements

**SEARCH**

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

*Finding too little or too much? Re-focus your topic.*

**LOCATE**

Locate information in library or on the Web

*Need more or different information? Keep searching.*

**EVALUATE**

Evaluate quality of information found

*Is it not adequate? Keep searching. Locate additional sources.*

**INVESTIGATE**

Identify a research topic
Understand assignment parameters

State topic as a focused research question or thesis statement

**UTILIZE**

Utilize information for paper, speech, presentation, or research project

Communicate what you found to a particular audience

*Still missing something? Search, locate, evaluate, and document additional sources.*

**DOCUMENT**

Give credit with proper citations

Document resources