

Steps in the Research Process

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- **Define and narrow the search problem... exactly what is it you're looking for?**
 - ✓ Identify keywords and concepts
 - Try any of several “graphic organizer” techniques to help discover useful keywords and terms...
 - www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/torganiz.htm
 - “Clustering” (also called “Concept Mapping”) especially helpful for this
 - Concept maps explained:
 - www.graphic.org/concept.html
 - Try using *Inspiration* software
 - Quickly draw “concept map” as you brainstorm terms
 - Builds an outline in background while you work!
- **Identify search tools you'll use**
 - ✓ Use “Help” or “Tips” for each tool to learn its particular syntax or techniques
- **Conduct your searches using careful search strategies**
 - ✓ What keywords will zero in on exactly what you want?
 - ✓ What keywords will *exclude* what you don't want? (NOT or “-“)
 - ✓ Should you use a phrase? (“ ”)
 - ✓ Should you capitalize?
- **Evaluate hits and refine search as necessary. For each page you look at...**
 - ✓ Relevant to what I need?
 - ✓ Sufficiently current?
 - ✓ Reliable? Should I believe it's true?
 - ✓ Understandable and clear?
- **Try other search tools if necessary**

- **Select and save or print only pages you've looked through enough to know they're truly useful**
 - ✓ Note URL & date for each page you save/print
- **Consider other sources**
 - ✓ Online databases your school/public library subscribes to
 - Usually avail. from home via the Web
 - Request login from library in person
 - Often quicker to high-quality info.
 - ✓ Library's online catalog to find books(!)
 - May be avail. from home via the Web
 - Reference books w/ great info. may not show up!... Ask librarian to show you some
- **Analyze the information**
 - ✓ Read each page thoroughly
 - What does it emphasize?
 - What information does it contain that the others don't?
- **Take notes on all original documents**
 - ✓ Put away originals and work from notes from now on!
 - Avoid plagiarism
 - Faster than trying to rewrite worse from originals
 - Easier to organize notes than originals
 - Understand the information better
- **Organize notes logically**
 - ✓ Group similar notes together
 - ✓ Arrange so notes flow in a logical progression to explain and support what you want to say

- ✓ Write outline if helpful (or required)
- ***Reach your own conclusions***
 - ✓ What point are you making with all the information you've collected?
 - ✓ Create or refine your theme statement
 - Usually expressed at the beginning of your paper or presentation
- ***Write your paper / speaking notes / presentation slides***
 - ✓ **From notes**, not original documents!
 - ✓ Advantages:
 - Avoid plagiarism
 - Easier to organize notes than full-text documents
 - Understand the information better
- ***Cite your sources***
 - ✓ Create a bibliography ("Works Cited") page or screen
 - ✓ Use MLA style (unless teacher specifies another)
- ***Evaluate your work***
 - ✓ Is it enough (length, depth)?
 - Is it too long or in-depth?
 - Are there unnecessary elements you should delete?
 - ✓ Clear and smooth? No spelling or grammatical errors?
 - ✓ Is it the best you can do?
 - If not, why?
 - What could you do better next time?