

THE SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH PROCESS

KEYS TO YOUR SUCCESS

Research is always a multistep process.

Research is often interdisciplinary.

Think broadly about your topic; then narrow and refine the focus.

Keep a record of everything you find and where and how you find it.

STEPS TO YOUR SUCCESS

Gather Background Information

- Get a broad overview of the subject or topic.
- Use reference databases or print reference sources such as subject-specific encyclopedias.
- Get more focused, in-depth, or historical background on the topic.

Identify Your Topic

- The topic is the idea that you are researching. Example: Pollution in the ocean.
- Think about and visualize your topic from many different angles.
- Note related and interrelated topics.
- Note terminology and synonyms that can broaden your searching power.
- State your topic as a question. Example: how does pollution affect the ocean?
- Refine the question. Example: How does oil pollution affect marine life in the ocean?
- Identify key concepts and list synonyms for them. Example: ocean, seawater; pollution, oil spills; marine life, organisms, biology, plants, animals, fish, mammals.
- List disciplines or subject areas that relate to part of your research. Example: oceanography, environment and life sciences, fisheries, natural resources, marine affairs, biology, aquaculture, business.

Focus your Research

- Gather up-to-date, current information on the topic.
- Use appropriate periodical information from popular, trade, and scholarly sources.
- Use high-quality, appropriate web sites.
- Gather in-depth, focused information on the topic.
- Search for books, research studies, surveys, and experiments about your topic.

Evaluate Your Sources

- Does the author have authority on the topic?
- What are the author's credentials?
- Is the information accurate for when it was written?
- Is there a consensus of opinion on this topic? What are the important ideas?
- What is the purpose of the source? How will it impact your research?
- Is the purpose to inform, entertain, teach, or to influence?
- Who is the author writing for? Is it biased in any way?
- Has the author looked at the material objectively?
- Does the author offer several points of view?
- How does the source help answer your research questions?
- Does the source provide valuable, relevant information?
- Does the source provide information relevant to your research focus/thesis argument?