

Clarkson University Libraries:

The Research Process

Remember: Research is iterative - you'll make changes learn as you do the research, and that's okay!

Step 1:

- Identify your topic - what is interesting to you?
 - Does it align with your assignment?
 - Talk to your professor
 - Are there any current trends in the topic area you want to explore?
- Write down your keywords (main concepts/search terms)
 - Look for synonyms (words with the same meaning)

Step 2:

- Locate background information on the topic
 - Textbook materials
 - Encyclopedia
 - Discovery Search from the library homepage
- Keep track of your research resources!
 - Use a citation management tool like Zotero or Mendeley

Step 3:

- Narrow or broaden your topic
 - Too many results in preliminary research? Narrow your topic
 - Add limiters, like a date range for results
 - Add additional keywords
 - Not enough results? Make your search more broad
 - Is there a larger concept your search topic falls under?
 - Try adding OR operators in an Advanced Search
- Write your topic as a question or hypothesis
 - This might lead to sub-questions
 - Are there any new keywords or search strings you can use?
- Still having trouble? Email a librarian or use AskUS 24/7 to talk directly with a librarian!

Step 4:

- Use the library catalog to search for print and eBooks

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Step 5:

- Discipline-specific databases can show more results related to your topic
 - Search for articles or a specific journal
- Look up some Advanced Search Tips for more ways to find information!

Step 6:

- Consider other sources
 - Statistics
 - Legal information or regulations
 - Government information
 - Primary sources
- To find these sources:
 - Look for any subject guides on the Library website
 - Google Scholar for scholarly information
 - InterLibrary Loan
 - Open Educational Resources

Step 7:

- Evaluate your sources
 - Are journal articles peer-reviewed?
 - Was the research sponsored by a respected organization in your discipline?
- Look up additional Subject Guides for evaluating sources!

Step 8:

- Visit the Clarkson University Writing Center for help on the writing process
- **CITE YOUR SOURCES**
 - Plagiarism is a serious issue and can result in failing grades and even expulsion
 - Verify all citations generated by a website or citation management system against the official style guide for the citation style you are using
- Contact a librarian through email or AskUs 24/7 for help!

Research Question:

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Keywords:

Synonyms

Search strings used:

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Sources:

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