

# Clarkson University Libraries:

## The Research Process

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**Remember:** Research is iterative - expect to make changes and learn as you do your research!

### 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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