



The Research Process: 7 Steps to Success

Research can be very tricky, but here is a wonderful solution to help and guide you. Use these seven steps to complete the research for an academic research paper.

BEFORE YOU START: Although there are 7 steps in the research process, it is VERY important that you know and understand the requirements of the assignment before you begin. Clear expectations will help you make better research decisions. Specific details to know include the required length, **format**, **subject area**, and **resources**.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT is to write an academic research paper in which you set out to answer/solve a problem in the world that interests you. The paper must be **3-5 pages** (not including the title page or list of references), follow the guidelines of **APA or MLA** format, and include at least **five print/electronic sources** of information in different formats (**at least one print source, no more than three websites, NO WIKIPEDIA**).

STEP 1: Pick a Topic/Research Question

- Identify a topic that interests you and meets the assignment requirements.
- Phrase your topic as a question to be answered by your paper.
- Make sure your question is specific and researchable.
- **Example: *Does violence in movies and video games influence violent behavior in teenagers?***

STEP 2: Find Background Information

- Background information will help you plan and organize your paper.
- Encyclopedias and other reference materials are excellent sources of background information, but other sources such as books, articles, and websites are also helpful.



- Locate subject terms and search words to use for your research.
- Keep in mind that you may need to revise your topic.

STEP 3: Find Books

- Search library catalogs and databases to find print and electronic books.
- Navigate print materials in the library organized by Library of Congress or Dewey classification.
- Use subject headings and keywords to search.
- If you need assistance, ask a librarian.

STEP 4: Find Articles

- Articles from scholarly journals, newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals are excellent sources of information.
- Scholarly journal articles are available in library databases as well as magazines and newspapers.
- If you need assistance, ask a librarian.

STEP 5: Find Web Resources

- For additional resources, search Google (or Google Scholar for scholarly journals).
- As you search, make sure the sources you locate are reliable and acceptable for the assignment.
- You may visit Wikipedia to look at the links and other sources, but **DO NOT USE WIKIPEDIA AS A SOURCE.**

STEP 6: Evaluate Your Materials

- To ensure you have good sources of information, conduct a careful review.



- If you feel uncertain about one of your sources, use a different one.
- Use CRAAP or another evaluation checklist for guidance.
- If you are uncertain about one or more of your sources, ask a librarian.

STEP 7: Cite Your Sources

- Select a paper format (APA, MLA) and follow it consistently.
- For every source you use/consult, you must include a complete citation in your References/Works Cited page.
- Whenever you quote or refer to information from a source, you must also use an in-text citation.
- Failure to use appropriate citations may result in a failing grade and/or expulsion.