RESEARCH AND WRITING

INFORMATION LITERACY -1
Research Paper
First Things First

• Your instructor hands out an assignment that asks you to incorporate three outside sources.

• Where can you start researching? The Library!
Start your project by making sure you understand the requirements. Is something unclear? Ask your instructor for clarification.
Plan Ahead !!!

Research takes time. Create a basic schedule for yourself, working backward from your paper’s due date. Paper length will vary the amount of time it takes to write your paper, but it always helps to plan ahead. Steps to plan for:

• Gathering sources
• Reading sources
• Gathering/reading sources to fill in any holes in your argument
• Creating an outline
• Writing the paper (including citations)
• Revising the paper
• Printing/handling it in on time
Brainstorm

Is your assignment really broad? For example: “take a stance on a controversial topic and write a paper arguing for your side.” You have a ton of options, but focus! Try these steps.

• Pick a basic subject that interests you.
• Brainstorm all of the issues that pop into your head.
• Do some preliminary research and see what else you learn.
• Add to your brainstorm web.
• Select a branch of your web that’s focused, can be argued for and against, and that seems to have information published about it so you can find enough sources.
Research Question

So you’ve brainstormed your topic and you think you have a direction to take. To stay focused, it’s sometimes helpful to write your topic out as a research question.

Examples:

• How does teen pregnancy impact a woman's educational future?
• How has global warming impacted crop production in southern California?
• How is chain and rope imagery used throughout Tracks?
Sources Search

Information is everywhere! As a consumer of information your task is to figure out what type of information is best for your paper!

Information sources to consider…

• Journal articles
• Books (tried and true!)
• Just Google it
Journal Articles

• Articles published in scholarly journals tend to be both credible and current.

• The library subscribes to various databases where you can search for articles on your topic. Some databases gather articles on a specific topic such as health or English while others have a multidisciplinary approach.
Books Tried And True (And Online!)

- Books continue to be a valuable source of information. Books are often a great place to find basic background information about your topic. Unable to make it to the library? No problem. Check out the library's eBook collection.
Google is a great tool, but be sure to understand exactly what you are looking at when you find a seemingly useful website.

Some sites are inappropriate to use because of credibility issues. Examples include:

- Wikipedia
- Blogs
- Discussion boards
- Biased websites

Some sources can be great and useful for your paper! Tools available through the library website can help you analyze credibility.

- Government websites
- Nationally known/credible organization (e.g. association websites, Mayo Clinic, national newspapers/websites etc.)
Reading = Knowledge

• Your paper will be proof that you have gained knowledge about your subject. Take time to read your sources. Underline important information or quotations you want to include in your paper (Just not in library books, please; in that case use post-it notes).
Thesis

- You’ve done the research. You understand your topic. Now you need to develop a thesis statement, which will be the overarching argument of your paper. All of the information in your paper - quotes from the text, viewpoints of scholars, scientific studies, facts/stats/figures and summarized info - will work together to prove your thesis. Be sure to watch the video in this unit to learn more.
Outlines

1. Why are outlines helpful?
   a. Structure your paper
   b. Clarify your argument
   c. Faster writing process
   d. Notice gaps in information

2. What to include?
   a. Intro, conclusion
   b. Arguments/focus
   c. Points made in paragraphs
   d. Quotation placement

- Intro with thesis statement
- Background Info
- Argument 1
  a. Point
  b. Quote from Smith
  c. Quote from Allen
  d. Point
- Argument 2
  a. Example from Bullhead
  b. Point
  c. Quote from Smith
- Argument 3
  a. Point
  b. Quote from Booth
- Conclusion
Sit back relax and start writing. What citation format does your instructor ask you to use? In-text citations need to be built into your sentence structure. Keep that in mind as you begin incorporating sources.
As you incorporate an outside source into your paper, it is important to give credit to that author for all of their hard work. Anytime you paraphrase or directly quote someone else’s work, you have to give them a shout out. Future lessons will show you how this works.
Re-read, Revise, Repeat

- Mistakes happen to the best of us. Catching spelling errors, odd sentence structure, or jumbled ideas before you turn your paper in will ensure a better grade.
It’s Perfect! Turn It In.

• Don’t wait for the last second to print off your paper or submit it online. That is generally the time the universe decides to jam the printer or mess with your Internet connection. Submit your paper and then . . . . . . Relax!!!
Feeling Lost?

• Help is always available. If you're finding the assignment confusing, be sure to approach your instructor for clarification. If research gets tough, your local library staff will be happy to help. Paper not coming together? Talk to the tutoring center, ask your instructor, or find a trusted friend or family member to read through it. Fresh eyes tend to help you refocus.