2015

The Research Process 2016

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The Research Process

2015 - 2016

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The Research Process Handbook 2015 -2016

Understand Your Assignment

If you are unclear about any of the following, please check with your professor. They will be glad you did!

- ☐ When is it due?

- ☐ How long should it be?

- ☐ Is my topic sufficiently broad enough to find information, and sufficiently narrow so you are not overwhelmed with information?

- ☐ How many sources are needed?

- ☐ What kinds of sources are needed? (scholarly journal articles, books, films…)

- ☐ Where should I look for these sources? (specialized databases, specific library research guide, Google…)

- ☐ Who should I contact with questions about research? (library faculty, classroom professor…)

- ☐ What kind of a project is it? (informative, persuasive, analytical…)

- ☐ Citation Style (Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago…)

- ☐ Do I understand how to organize and outline my paper?

- ☐ Who should I contact for help with writing my paper? (The Writing Center, professor…)

- ☐ Do I understand the format of my project? (1 inch margins, Times New Roman 12 point font…)

Primary & Secondary Sources

What are Primary Sources?

Primary sources are original texts and objects which were written or created at the time under study. Primary sources have not been interpreted or edited. Examples include:

- **ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS** - video footage, interviews, speeches, laws, autobiographies, novels, diaries, poems, letters, journal articles presenting original research, official records, maps, polling results, memoirs, census data…

- **CREATIVE WORKS** - music, paintings, sculpture, poetry, novels, plays, photographs…

- **ARTIFACTS & OBJECTS** - clothing, pottery, tools, weapons, coins, furniture…

What are Secondary Sources?

Secondary sources are created by someone either not present when the event took place, or removed by time from the event. They may use primary sources to interpret or analyze an event. Examples include:

- **TEXTS:** encyclopedias, biographies, textbooks, non-fiction books…

- **CREATIVE WORKS:** art collages, documentaries, edited photographs…

Primary and Secondary Sources Compared

TOPIC	Primary Source	Secondary Source
Current Events	Video footage of shore damage done by Hurricane Sandy	A documentary about Hurricane Sandy that includes video footage, interviews, and photographs
Literature	The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee	A literary criticism article that analyzes human morality through the characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Physics	Data from a space telescope	A physics 101 textbook
Art	The painting *Starry Night* by Van Gogh	A journal article that references *Starry Night* to discuss the history of post-impressionism

Scholarly & Non-Scholarly Sources

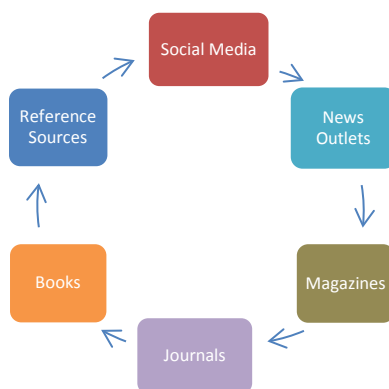|	Scholarly Articles	Non-Scholarly Articles
Check off the boxes to see whether your article is scholarly or not.		
WHO WRITES THESE ARTICLES?	☐ Scholars and researchers in the field ☐ Names & credentials are clearly stated	☐ Journalists/staff & guest writers ☐ Names are not always noted
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THESE ARTICLES?	☐ To share the results of primary research & experiments with experts in their field of study	☐ To inform or entertain
WHO READS THESE ARTICLES?	☐ Subject matter experts in the field ☐ Those interested in the topic at a research level – researchers, college students, professors, etc.	☐ Anyone
HOW LONG ARE THEY?	☐ Articles may be lengthy, approximately 6 to 30+ pages	☐ Articles may be short, approximately 1 to 5 pages
WHO DECIDES WHICH ARTICES ARE PUBLISHED?	☐ Experts in the field review each article for accuracy, relevance, etc. (the peer review process)	☐ Editors and other writers of the publication decide based on consumer appeal - no peer review
HOW DO THESE ARTICLES LOOK?	☐ The majority have a simple black-and-white format, charts, graphs, statistics, list of references, minimal or no advertising	☐ Lots of pictures, photographs, advertisements – designed to appeal to the general public
DO THEY CITE THEIR SOURCES?	☐ Always - using the official citation style appropriate to the discipline (APA, MLA, Chicago etc.)	☐ Rarely - though may link to a source/mention sources informally in the text of the article

The Information Cycle

What is the Information Cycle?

- The Information Cycle is the progression of media coverage of a newsworthy event over time
- Understanding how the Information Cycle progresses will let you know what kind of information is available at a particular point in time
- An "event" that begins an Information Cycle could be a: tsunami, election, just published research article, novel, new building, terrorist act, new technology, etc.
- Not all newsworthy events will complete an Information Cycle

Minutes after an event: Internet/Social Media

Information:
- Tends to be fragmented and basic, describing what happened and who was involved
- Is continuously updated as new details become available
- May lack details, facts, and accuracy
- Is written by a mix of laypersons, bloggers, journalists, etc.

Examples: *Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram*

Day/Days after an event: News Reports

Information:
- Contains more details about an event than earlier reports including quotes, statistics, interviews
- Is written by journalists, contributors, etc., and while often factual, may reflect editorial bias
- Does not include a reference list of sources, though may provide links to sources
- Is intended for a general audience

Examples: *The New York Times, CBS Nightly News*

The Information Cycle (cont'd)

Week/Weeks of an event: Magazines

Information:
- Is more in-depth, and discusses the impact of an event on society, and public policy
- Is written by journalists, contributors, etc., and while often factual, may reflect editorial bias
- Does not include a reference list of sources, though may provide links to sources
- Is intended for a general audience

Examples: *Time, New York Magazine*

Months after an event: Scholarly Journals

Information:
- Is written by people considered to be experts in the field: researchers, scientists, etc.
- Is often original research about an event, sometimes including empirical data
- Includes detailed analysis, and a full list of sources (bibliography)
- Is written for other researchers in the field and those interested in the topic at a research level

Examples: *Journal of Islamic Studies, Journal of Financial Economics*

Year/Years after an event: Books

Information:
- Often expands analysis of an event using information found in journals, newspapers, and magazines
- Will often place an event in a historical context
- Is written by a mix of professional and non-professional authors
- Will sometimes include in-text citation and a full list of sources

Example: *Columbine: A True Crime Story* **by Jeff Kass (2013)**

Year/Years after an event: Reference Sources

Information:
- Is considered established knowledge
- May lack the details and specifics of earlier sources of information (e.g. journal articles)
- Provides summaries and overviews of the event, often with a list of sources
- Written for a general audience

Examples: *Encyclopedias, Textbooks, Dictionaries, Handbooks*

Evaluate Information Checklist

QCC Databases and books are excellent sources for reputable, credible information. If you are not sure how to access/use them, see a librarian at the Reference Desk in the library. Whether you are looking at books, the Internet, or scholarly journals in databases, complete this checklist to ensure your information needs are met:

What Kind Of Information Do You Need?

Depending on your research project, specific information sources may be more appropriate than others.

For example, if you are writing an article about food blogging in the United States, blogs may be one type of information source you could use. If you are exploring a possible link between pesticides and cancer, scholarly journals and books may be more appropriate.

Relevance Checklist

__ Scholarly sources (journal articles etc.) are appropriate

__ Non-scholarly sources (magazines, blogs, websites) are appropriate

__ A combination of scholarly and non-scholarly sources is ideal

Who Wrote It?

The author of the information (whether a person or organization) should have knowledge about the topic and/or expertise in analyzing and presenting information.

Their names should be evident and you should be able to contact them.

Authority Checklist

Full name: _____

Expertise: _____

Contact info: _____

Domain (.com .gov .org .edu):_____

Why Did They Write It?

There could be many reasons why a piece of information was created: to persuade you to do something, to inform you about something, to sell you something, etc.

Ask yourself: What does the author want me to do with this information?

Purpose Checklist

__ To inform

__ To persuade

__ To sell something

__ To entertain

__ Something else _____

Evaluate Information Checklist (*cont'd*)

Who Was it Written For?

The intended audience impacts the quantity, quality, and range of what is presented. The more general the audience, the more general the information.

The reverse is also true: the more specific the audience (e.g. researchers) the more the information will be focused and detailed.

Audience Checklist

__ Anyone
__ Researchers/professionals
__ Members of a trade or industry (e.g. educators)

How Old/New Is It?

Some topics are more time-sensitive than others. For example, information about the latest computer technology is more time sensitive than information about the first moon landing in 1969.

Currency Checklist

__ Currency is important for this topic
__ Currency does not matter
__ The information is current
__ The information is not current

Is It Accurate?

Some tip-offs to accuracy include the stated expertise of the author, whether the article cites the sources used, where the article was posted, and the care taken in presenting the information (e.g. no typos).

Accuracy Checklist

__ Expertise of author is stated
__ Sources are cited
__ Text is free of grammatical errors

Narrow Your Topic

Have you ever picked a topic, did some research, and realized …

- ☐ **The information you found had a vague, general quality**
- ☐ **You were overwhelmed by the amount of information you found**
- ☐ **You got frustrated – you didn't know which direction to go!**

… It was probably because the topic was **TOO BROAD**.

Use the following questions to narrow your topic and guide your research. For example, here are some ways you could narrow the broad topic **EDUCATION:**

WHO are the people/groups you want to focus on?
➜ college students, minorities, Kindergarten - 12th grade (K-12), teachers…

WHAT aspect of the topic interests you?
➜ study habits, bullying, education reform, desegregation…

WHICH point-of-view/approach will you take?
➜ legal, ethical, psychological, scientific, historical, political…

WHEN did important events occur?
➜ today, 1950's, next ten years, President Reagan years…

WHERE do you want to focus, geographically?
➜ Alabama, New York, China…

It is possible to create several distinct research tracks from a single topic:

Track #1: college-students ➜ study habits ➜ psychological ➜ today ➜ China

Track #2: K-12 ➜ education reform ➜ historical ➜ President Reagan years ➜ New York

Track #3: minorities ➜ desegregation ➜ legal ➜ 1950's ➜ Alabama

Narrow Your Topic Worksheet

WHO are the people/groups you want to focus on?

_____

_____

WHAT aspect of the topic interests you?

_____

_____

WHICH point-of-view/approach will you take?

_____

_____

WHEN did important events occur?

_____

_____

WHERE do you want to focus, geographically?

_____

_____

Refine Your Topic

A common mistake beginning researchers make is to pick a topic - no matter how broad - and then to immediately try and find all the information they can about it.

A better method is to first refine a topic into a question worth answering or a problem worth solving (this may involve preliminary research). Then you will be in a position to find the specific information you need, rather than be overwhelmed with irrelevant information. Use the template below to help refine your topic.

1. **Topic:** *what you are writing about -* **I am working on the topic of _____**

2. **Indirect Question:** *what you want to know about it -* **because I want to know who / what / when / where / why / if _____**

3. **Significance:** *why you want your reader to know and care about it -* **in order to help my reader understand better _____**

HINT: If you are having trouble moving from one stage to the next, keep asking yourself ***Why?*** until you find your answer.

You may not be able to answer the third question until you have done some significant research, and/or have completed a first draft.

EXAMPLES:

1. Topic: I am studying climate change   ***Why?***

2. **Indirect Question:** because I want to know how global warming could impact NYC ***Why?***

3. **Significance:** in order to know how to prepare for another Hurricane Sandy.

1. Topic: I am researching social media   ***Why?***

2. **Indirect Question:** because I want to know what Twitter does with users' data ***Why?***

3. **Significance:** in order to find the best ways to safeguard privacy when online.

Adapted, with changes, from: Booth, Wayne C, Gregory G and Williams, Joseph M. *Craft of Research*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago. 2009.

Refine Your Topic Worksheet

If you are having trouble moving from one stage to the next, keep asking yourself **_Why?_** until you find your answer.

You may not be able to answer the third question until you have done some significant research, and/or have completed a first draft.

I am working on the topic of

---

because I want to know who/ what/ when/ where/ why/ if

---

in order to help my reader understand

Develop Keywords and Related Terms
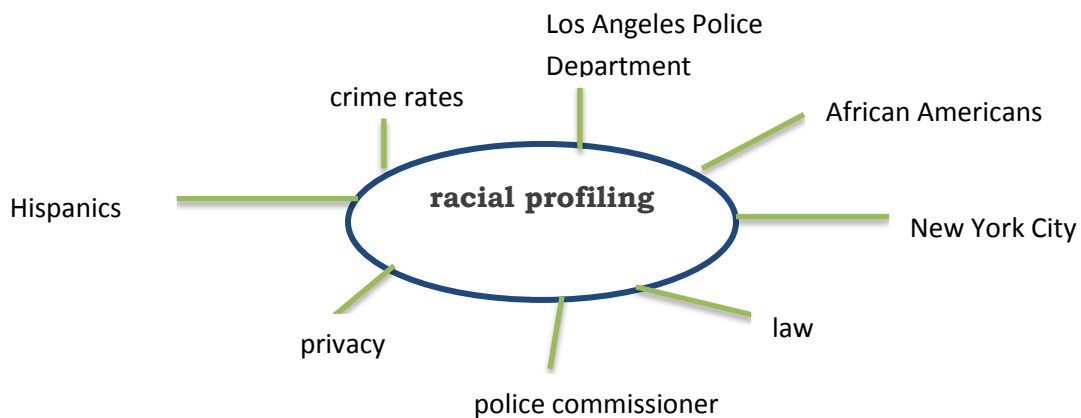
Keywords

If you read an article about **racial profiling** and the **police** and would like to write a paper on this topic, keep in mind:

- The keywords you use may not be the words that others use to describe the same concept
- It is a good idea to have a few similar words (*synonyms*) for each keyword
- Write down any synonyms you find as you research
- Try different combinations of keywords to get different results

ethnic profiling

stop and frisk

racial profiling

police

officers

law enforcement
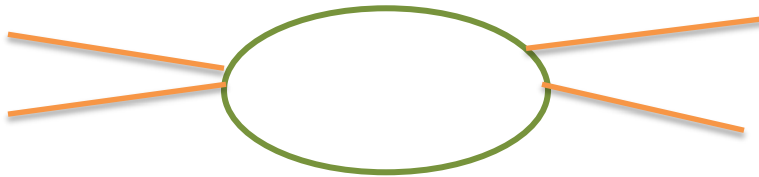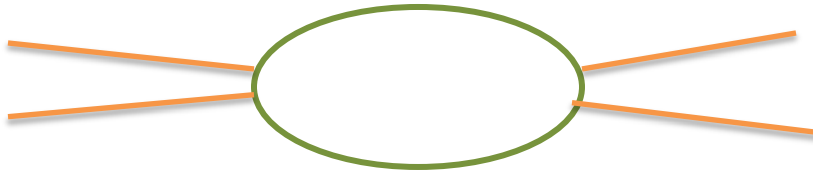
detectives

authorities

Related Terms

- Related terms are *associated* with your topic, without being synonyms for them
- For example, **poverty** and **food stamps** are related terms, but they mean different things
- Write down any related terms you find as you research
- Finding related terms for your topic will help direct your research

crime rates

Los Angeles Police Department

African Americans

Hispanics

racial profiling
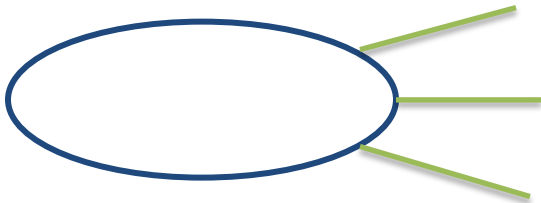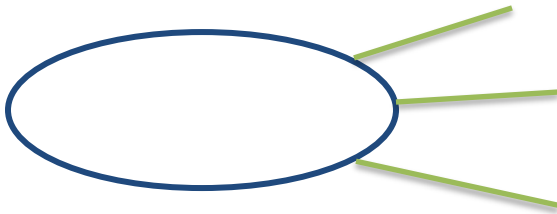
New York City

privacy

law

police commissioner

Keywords and Related Terms Worksheet

Keywords for your topic –similar words (*synonyms*)

Related Terms for your Keywords

Write a Thesis Statement

The best thesis statement is written after you have done some research on your topic. It usually consists of three parts:

1. **Your topic**
2. **Your position on the topic**
3. **Evidence-based reasons for your position**

Thesis Template: **my topic** is/contributes to/ **my position on topic** because of **reason 1**, **reason 2** and **reason 3**

Example 1:

Facebook **leads to a decline in student grades** because **it takes up time a student could spend studying**. **It leads to attention deficit disorder** and **causes depression**.

Example 2:

In terms of rhythm, the **tendency to sample the melodies of the day**, and **musical structure**, **there are undeniable similarities** between **hip-hop and classical music.**

Example 3:

It should be illegal to own **pet giraffes in the city** because **they eat all the shrubs**, **it is hard to clean up after them**, and **they damage property**.

A common obstacle to creating a good thesis statement occurs when you choose a topic that is either too broad or too narrow. If a topic is too broad your thesis will be vague; if it is too narrow it will be difficult to find evidence to back up your claim.

Thesis Statement Worksheet

1. Your topic:_____

2. Your position on the topic:

   _____

3. Evidence-based reasons for your position:

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____

Working Thesis Statement:

_____

_____

_____

Expect to modify this Working Thesis Statement as you do more research, think more about your topic, and consult your professor.

Final Thesis Statement:

_____

_____

_____

Simple Paper Outline

I. Introduction

1. Introduce your topic with an attention grabbing sentence, quote, or statistic
2. Provide some background information about your topic (*cite your sources!*)
3. State your position on the topic, and briefly outline the evidence-based reasons which will prove your position (your thesis statement)

II. Body

1. **Point 1**
   a. Present your evidence (*cite your sources!*)
   b. Consider alternate viewpoints
   c. Explain how the evidence relates to your thesis

2. **Point 2**
   a. Give evidence (*cite your sources*!)
   b. Consider alternate viewpoints
   c. Explain how the evidence relates to your thesis

3. **Point 3**
   a. Give evidence (*cite your sources!*)
   b. Consider alternate viewpoints
   c. Explain how the evidence relates to your thesis

III. Conclusion

1. Summarize the topic and your position
2. Explore the implications of the points you raised
3. Consider any practical applications to your findings

Simple Paper Outline Worksheet

I. Introduction

1. Attention Grabber _____
2. Background _____
3. Thesis Statement _____

II. Body

1. Point 1

a. Evidence_____
b. Alternate Views _____
c. Relation to Thesis _____

2. Point 2

a. Evidence_____
b. Alternate Views _____
c. Relation to Thesis _____

3. Point 3

a. Evidence_____
b. Alternate Views _____
c. Relation to Thesis _____

III. Conclusion

1. Summarize topic/position_____
2. Explore the implications of your findings/ideas_____
3. Consider any practical implications of your findings/ideas_____

"They Say, I Say" Templates

These templates and transitions, taken from Graff and Birkenstein, aid you in presenting your thesis, supporting evidence and opposing evidence in a clear, straightforward manner. Remember to cite all your sources, both in-text and at the end of your project.

Introducing Standard Views
- Many psychologists think that_____.
- The status quo has it that_____.
- Many people assume that_____.

Introducing Quotations
- X claims "_____."
- According to X "_____."
- X states "_____."

Explaining Quotations
- In essence, X is saying_____.
- What X means is that_____.
- In saying _____, X urges us to _____.

Signaling Who is Saying What
- According to both X and Y _____.
- X argues that students should _____.
- My own view, however, is that _____.

Disagreeing, with Reasons
- I disagree with X because I think she overlooks _____.
- X's belief about _____ rests on the faulty assumption that _____. Furthermore, research shows _____.
- Here, X contradicts himself. On the one hand he states _____. On the other hand he says _____.

Agreeing with a Difference
- X's research on _____ is important because it sheds insight on why _____.
- I agree that _____, a point that needs emphasizing since so many people believe _____.
- If group X is right that _____, then we need to reassess the popular assumption that _____.

Agreeing and Disagreeing Simultaneously
- Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that _____.
- X is right that _____, but she seems on more dubious ground when she claims that _____.
- My feelings on the issue are mixed. I do support X's position that _____, but I find Y's argument about _____ and Z's research on _____ to be equally persuasive.

Embedding Voice Markers
- X overlooks an important point about _____ when he says _____. In fact _____.
- I wholeheartedly endorse what X calls _____.
- These conclusions, which X discusses in _____, add weight to the argument that _____.

Capturing Authorial Action (e.g. in summary)
- X agrees that_____.
- X concedes that_____.
- X observes that_____.
- X claims that_____.
- X argues that_____.
- X demonstrates that_____.
- X reminds us that _____.

Adding Metacommentary
- What this means is_____.
- In sum_____.
- Put in another way_____.
- X's point is not _____ but rather _____.
- Article X explores _____, while article Y considers _____.

Making Concessions While Still Standing Your Ground
- Although I grant that _____, I still maintain that _____.
- While it is true that _____, it does not necessarily follow that _____.
- One the one hand I agree with X that _____. But on the other hand, I still insist that_____.

Indicating Who Cares
- _____used to think _____. But recently, _____ suggests that _____.
- At first glance, college students appear to _____. But on closer inspection _____.
- Researchers have long assumed that _____. For instance, one eminent psychologist X long argued that _____. However, new research on the topic shows that _____.

Establishing Why Your Claims Matter
- X matters/is important because _____.
- These conclusions/This discovery will have significant application in _____ as well as _____.
- Although X may seem of concern to only a small group of _____, it should in fact concern anyone who cares about _____.

Comparing Two or More Studies Findings
- By demonstrating _____, X's work extends the findings of Y.
- The results of X contradict Y's conclusion that _____.
- X's findings call into question the widely accepted theory that _____.

Explaining an Experimental Result
- One explanation for X's finding of _____ is that _____. An alternative explanation is _____.
- The difference between _____ and _____ is probably due to _____.

Introducing Gaps in the Existing Research
- Studies of X have indicated _____. It is not clear, however, that this conclusion applies to _____.
- _____ often take for granted that _____. Few have investigated this assumption however.
- X's work tells us a great deal about _____. Can this work be generalized to _____?

Commonly Used Transitions			
CAUSE AND EFFECT	**CONCLUSION**	**COMPARISON**	**CONTRAST**
accordingly	to sum up	along the same lines	despite
as a result	in conclusion, then	in the same way	although
since	consequently	likewise	nevertheless
therefore	hence	similarly	on the other hand
thus	it follows, then		on the contrary
ADDITION	**CONCESSION**	**EXAMPLE**	**ELABORATION**
also	granted	for instance	in other words
moreover	admittedly	consider	to put it in another way
furthermore	I concede that	for example	in short
so too	although it is true that	to take a case in point	by extension
besides	of course	as an illustration	to put it bluntly

Adapted, with changes from: Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing.* New York: Norton, 2010.

Completed Paper Checklist

Please consult this checklist to ensure you have thoroughly researched and revised your assignment.

__ I have addressed all parts of the assignment.

__I consulted with a library faculty for help with:
     __topic selection and refinement
     __finding credible, authoritative sources of information
     __citing my sources

__ I use a variety of credible, authoritative evidence (for example, quotes, examples, facts, illustrations) to reinforce my argument(s).

__ I consulted with a Writing Tutor at The Writing Center to improve my paper's organization, argument, sentence structure and style.

__ My paragraphs are organized logically and help advance my argument.

__ My conclusion summarizes my argument and explores its implications; it does not simply restate the topic paragraph.

__ I have proofread my paper carefully, not relying on my computer to do it for me.

__ I consulted my professor if I had any questions or concerns about my paper.

__ My name is at the top of the paper.

__ The paper is stapled, double-spaced with 1" margins, and uses Times New Roman or a similarly sized/styled font.

__ All my sources are cited throughout my paper (in-text citations) and also in my bibliography, with the required citation style (APA, MLA, Chicago…).

__ I have read the plagiarism statement in the syllabus, understand it, and agree to abide by the definitions and penalties described there.

Adapted, with changes, from *How Learning Works: Seven Researched-Based Principles for Smart Teaching.* Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.