
This screencast illustrates some best practices to guide you in your course research assignment. If it varies from your assignment requirements, always check with your professor to clarify the details of your assignment.

One definition of the term “research” that’s especially helpful is by Bill Badke contained in a 3-minute demonstration [at http://www.acts.twu.ca/Library/ResearchModel.swf (requires Flash Shockwave plug-in)].

Begin your research project by studying the Badke Research Model. From the CUNE library page, choose Research help, then CUNE Research toolkit Part 1, number 1.

Notice in the model that each source of data might answer only one aspect of your research question. Let’s apply this model as we follow A Research Outline – we’ll use a completed example available at Help Desk Pages, then Art research project example.

First, select a topic and create an outline. In writing your research question or thesis statement, remember that “the goal of research is not to compile and report on information but to use information as a tool to solve a problem or deal with an issue” (quoted from Badke Research Model). You need to: 1) find an aspect of your topic that you can defend or attack or both, 2) present the evidence you’ve found, and 3) draw your conclusion or make your recommendation for further research.

Notice in the example that the research question becomes clearer through background reading in Britannica Online.

Second, develop a search strategy and follow it. For online database recommendations by discipline, see Research help.

Notice in the example that exploring Library of Congress subject headings and listing synonyms or related terms is an important step well worth the time.

Use a four-part process to search: (1) identify the main concepts in the research question; (2) list synonyms, related terms, or subject terms; (3) create preliminary searches in several potential online databases; (4) interact with the search results in each case to revise the search terms as needed.

Search in numerous relevant online databases using synonyms/related terms/subject terms representing the research question’s main concepts.

For example, by using the “Choose databases” link, you can search multiple relevant EBSCOhost databases at one time, increasing the chances of finding unique and valuable resources.

Footnotes or references in one resource can lead to additional relevant primary or secondary sources. Begin your searching early so you can take advantage of interlibrary loan.

Third, create the list of references. Create a free account in the CUNE library catalog to manage most of your references, automatically formatting citations according to various styles – users still need to proofread the formatting for accuracy. Or, use Part 3 of the CUNE Research Toolkit to choose a guide such as Owens Library as shown in the example.

In conclusion, since part of conducting research includes meeting unexpected twists and turns, another best practice is to contact a CUNE librarian with questions you have at any point. We’re glad to be of service and look forward to hearing from you!