



## THE RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: A PROCESS APPROACH

### 1. DECIDING ON A RESEARCH FOCUS:

- Choose a topic.
- Narrow the topic: What is the thesis, focus or purpose of the research? Consider course relevance and manageability.
- Develop a focused purpose question.

### 2. SELECTING SOURCES:

- Consider the variety of sources available.
- Select sources relevant to your specific focus.
- Assess for credibility: Expertise? Bias? Timeliness?
- Be comprehensive; search for "the truth."

### 3. COLLECTING OF EVIDENCE - RECORDKEEPING:

- Review sources for details, examples and facts that support your position or respond directly to your research question.
- Record these details in an orderly fashion. (Note cards?)
- Create an appropriate source citation for each source used. Follow specific style guidelines: MLA? APA? Other?
- Document details carefully to avoid plagiarism:
  - Use quotation marks for exact words.
  - Paraphrase if you want to restate the idea or details in your own words.
  - A brief summary can incorporate both exact words and paraphrasing. Use quotation marks as needed.
  - Note the source and page number(s) of the borrowed material (whether quoted or paraphrased).

### 4. PLANNING THE PAPER:

- Assess the details and evidence gathered. Relevant? Convincing? (Consider the opposition.) Enough? Fair?
- Organize the relevant details.
  - Put like ideas together. (Card clusters or color- coded notes?)
  - Create categories for related ideas.
  - Create a plan or outline based on your thesis and the supporting ideas or categories.
- Decide on a format. Use discipline-specific models, student samples and instructor's guidelines.
- Consider the generally accepted format of introduction, body of supporting paragraphs and conclusion as an underlying framework.

## **5. WRITING THE PAPER:**

- ❑ Clarify the purpose of your paper (your thesis) in the introduction section of your paper.
- ❑ Write the paper with the thesis in mind throughout.
- ❑ Use separate paragraphs to identify and develop each of your supporting ideas. Develop the framework of the paper in your own words, using the borrowed details to further explain and back up your points.
- ❑ Use commentary throughout the paper to introduce, clarify and discuss the importance of quotes and paraphrased information.
- ❑ Be sure to use quotation marks for any exact words taken from your sources.
- ❑ Use clear documentation throughout to indicate when you use paraphrased or quoted material. (Parenthetical notation? Footnotes? Endnotes?)  
Follow the assigned format or choose one approved style to follow consistently. (MLA, APA, Chicago format?)

## **6. CREATING AN INDEX OF SOURCES USED:**

- ❑ Develop a Works Cited or Selected Bibliography page.
- ❑ Use exact format as required by specific style guidelines used. (MLA, APA, another accepted style?)
- ❑ Note the "ingredients" needed for specific sources, the exact order of these items, the required punctuation and the heading and margin guidelines.

## **7. PRODUCING A FINAL DRAFT:**

- ❑ Read the document (once more) from beginning to end.
- ❑ Have you revised and edited carefully?
- ❑ Is the format accurate? Check margins, pagination, and spacing.
- ❑ Assess for all the required components: title page, outline, abstract, table of contents, bibliography or works cited page. (These will vary depending on the instructor, the discipline and the assignment.)
- ❑ Is the document neat? Make a positive first impression!