

## Steps in the Research Process

In this video, you will learn the 5 steps of the academic research process, that is how to:

- clarify your research needs and your topic,
- shape your research topic and develop a research question,
- choose the right research tools,
- evaluate your sources, and
- build a thesis statement.

Academic research is a process of discovering what has been said about a topic by experts, developing your own ideas, and contributing them to the ongoing scholarly conversation.

The 5 steps in the research process prompt you to work through a variety of sources, ask questions of these sources and of yourself that will shape your research question, and, eventually, articulate your own, informed, position about a topic.

### **STEP 1: Clarify Your Research Needs and Your Topic**

Start by reading the assignment to make sure you understand what is being asked of you.

Ask yourself ... do I understand my task? What format will the project take? What is the required length? How much time do I have to complete the task?

If you have questions, you should follow up with your instructor, as they are the ones with the greatest expertise and assign the marks for the course.

Once you understand your task, you can start preliminary research. You should start with sources that will provide you with background information as well as key terms and approaches relevant to your topic.

Chat with us via Ask Us for help with finding useful reference sources and other materials to get you started.

### **STEP 2: Shape Your Research Topic and Develop a Research Question**

Next, you are ready to start brainstorming ideas to pin down a focused research question.

The 5 Ws are helpful for brainstorming: Who? What? Where? When? Why? These questions will help you pinpoint your subject group, place, time-frame, and more. They will also help you determine the components and categories within your topic.

For example, if you are working on a psychology assignment related to social determinants of mental health, here are a few items to think about:

- choose your subject group--gender, age, socioeconomic status, etc.,
- define those social determinants,
- think about your geographic scope--potentially limit to a particular province,
- set a time frame--will you consider the past 5 years, 10 years, 50 years?

- consider why there are social determinants of mental health; why social groups, such as elderly or children, employed or unemployed, are affected differently.

Once you have developed answers to these questions, you can move on to questions that will further your investigation:

- Are change and emerging trends important to consider for your topic?
- What perspectives and methods of inquiry are common in your area of study?
- How will you present your argument? Will you explain, define, compare and contrast, evaluate, or review?
- What unique connections can you make between the ideas you have been reading about?

We can work through these questions to help you focus your research topic over the Ask Us chat. We can also review your preliminary research findings to make sure they support your research question.

### **STEP 3: Choose the Right Research Tools**

Once you know the parameters of the assignment and have a focused research question, you are ready to choose the right research tools. These include UNB Worldcat, discipline-specific databases, and more.

The best place to start is UNB Libraries' Research Guides. They offer you a curated list of resources for your topic area, including suggestions for reference works, books, journal articles as well as videos and other web content.

Contact us via Ask Us for expert assistance with library resources and further research strategies. For instance, we can help you brainstorm synonyms for your search vocabulary, build searches, review bibliographies and tables of contents in your sources, and point you to data resources you can use to support your research.

### **STEP 4: Evaluate Your Sources**

Now you are ready to evaluate your sources. There are different markers of quality you can use. In this video, we use the P.R.O.V.E.N. evaluation process, to test for markers of quality. (Keep in mind, this is one method among many that assess these common elements.)

<b>Purpose:</b>	How and why was the source created?
<b>Relevance:</b>	How does this source fit my research needs?
<b>Objectivity:</b>	What is the author's point of view?
<b>Verifiability:</b>	Is this source credible?
<b>Expertise:</b>	What are the author's credentials?
<b>Newness:</b>	Is the latest research what I need?

Take the time to read and reflect on all the sources you have collected and evaluated. This time investment is crucial for processing and engaging with perspectives in your research and will result in a better assignment.

Talk to us via Ask Us about evaluating your sources or finding alternative resources when your selections have not “proven” themselves to be worthy.

### **STEP 5: Build a Thesis Statement**

Once you have completed the first four steps, you can build your thesis statement with confidence.

The thesis statement is an answer to your research question and reflects the work that you invested in the research process thus far.

Following these five steps will guarantee your research success!

Remember to reach out to us at every stage of the process, and especially *before* you write your paper.

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### References

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