

Guide to Planning Your Research

Step 1: Select Topic/Formulate Research Question

Preliminary Topic/Question: What is the question to be answered or the problem to be solved?

KWL Chart		
What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

Focused Research Question: Revise and narrow your information problem or question based on what you listed in the K and W columns.

Step 2: Find & Evaluate Potential Sources

- Brainstorm **possible sources** of information. Think about print, non-print, electronic, human, and community.

- For this project I need _____ (#) print sources and _____ (#) non-print sources. In the above chart, put a **star** next to the sources you think will **best** meet your needs.
- List 6 **keywords** (or key phrases) that may help you conduct your search.

- Look through each source of information. Scan the table of contents and index (or the article/website) to find keywords or major concepts that would answer your research question.
- Evaluate each potential source to see if it will be useful to answer your information problem or question. Evaluate resources for:
 - **Relevancy** – Is the information relevant to the question?
 - **Appropriateness** – Is the information suitable for my age and values? Will it help me answer my question?
 - **Detail** – How much information do I need? Is the depth of coverage adequate?
 - **Currency** – When was the information published or last updated?
 - **Authority** – Who is the author of the information? What are his/her qualifications?
 - **Bias** – Why was this information written? Was it written to inform me, persuade me, or sell me something?

Step 3: Record Sources and Note Taking

- Having selected useful, reliable sources, record each source according to your teacher's directions. Use the citation style (MLA, APA, etc.) required by your teacher. Use your writing handbook for models.
- Record information in your own words or in quotation marks in the note taking format required by your teacher. Make sure you record the source with the notes you take to prepare for your works cited page.

Step 4: Organize Your Information

- Using your notes, organize your ideas into the major sections of your paper.
- Within each section, organize your notes in the order you plan to present the information.
- Further organize notes into an outline. See the writing handbook for outlining guidelines.

Step 5: Create Project

- Go back to Step 1 and review the question to be answered or the problem to be solved.
- Does the information you have gathered answer the question or solve the information problem? If **no** → go back and look for more information. Fill in the gaps. Proceed to the next step only when you are able.
- When **yes** → complete your final project according to the teacher's directions. Revise and edit as needed. Remember to always have at least one other person give you feedback on your work.
- Fill in Column 3, Learned, of your KWL chart with information you have gathered evaluated, recorded, organized, and synthesized through your research.

Step 6: Self-Evaluate

- How would you improve your research process and/or your final product with your next research project?

- Did you enjoy learning about your subject / topic? Why or why not?

- How well does your product show what you have learned? Explain.
