Starting the Research Process

Part 1: Organizing for the Project
1. Before you can begin research, it is beneficial to analyze your assignment. You can use your time more effectively if you do a little work before heading to the library. This section will help you to determine the appropriate size, scope and point of view for your assignment. It will also help you to focus your topic and compile a list of synonyms which will help with your research later on.

2. Identify the assignment’s purpose: The amount of research you need depends upon the type of assignment. Carefully examine the guidelines your professor has given you. Talk with your professor about your ideas and do not hesitate to ask your faculty person for clarification. Before you begin your research, it is helpful to identify:
   a. Your topic
   b. Size and scope of your paper
   c. Point of view (subjective or objective?)
   d. Types of sources to consult

3. Choosing a topic: Selecting an appropriate topic is important. If you pick a topic that is too broad (e.g., the theology of John Wesley) you will be overwhelmed with all of the information you find. However, if you pick a topic that is too narrow (e.g., John Wesley’s opinion about the Declaration of Independence), you will become frustrated when you cannot find enough information. Use these hints to help you pick your topic:
   a. Browse through your textbook until you find something interesting
   b. Talk with your professor about your ideas, or ask for clarification.
   c. Talk with friends or classmates.
   d. Browse current issues of magazines or newspapers.
   e. Check out the library’s resources (including a Librarian).
   f. Run a preliminary search of your keywords or phrases through the library’s new Quick Search search engine (see below)

4. Determine the Size and Scope of Your Paper: To determine the size and scope of your paper, consider the nature of your assignment. The type of assignment determines how much information you will need and where you should go for the information.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Five-minute oral presentation</td>
<td>use dictionaries, encyclopedias, commentaries, journal articles, or statistical handbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two minute essay or personal reflection</td>
<td>use personal experience, journal articles, books, and encyclopedias</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-page research paper</td>
<td>use more in-depth resources, including books, journals, commentaries, and subject specific research databases.</td>
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Important tips:
a. Important Tips: It is better to get more information than you think you need so you will not have to re-do the research process
b. Remember that dictionaries and encyclopedias are great places to start for any assignment to gain background information, terminology used, and names of experts in the field.

5. Identify the point of view: When writing a paper, it is important to identify what type of perspective your professor expects in order to find the appropriate sources.

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<tr>
<th><strong>Subjective</strong></th>
<th><strong>Objective</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>An opinion on a particular subject</td>
<td>Not influenced by personal opinions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Useful if the information is going to be used for a debate or an argumentative essay</td>
<td>Useful if you are expected to give an impartial explanation of a subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples of sources: editorials in journals, internet sites, popular magazines, and books</td>
<td>Examples of sources: scholarly journals, popular magazines, denominational websites, authoritative websites, books</td>
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6. Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How: Once you have identified the type of assignment you are going to research, it may be necessary to focus your topic. Try stating your topic as a question. Ask yourself What? Where? When? Who? Why? and How? This way you can identify the main concepts for your topic and determine what terms would help you find more information.

7. Compile a list of synonyms: Once you have identified the main issues regarding your subject, write down keywords or phrases that you could use to find information.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>If your terms are too specific, you will not find enough information. If your terms are too general, you will find too much. In these cases you will need to narrow or broaden the terms of your search.</th>
<th>To Narrow:</th>
<th>To Broaden:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>add specific terms to your questions</td>
<td>use more general terms</td>
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In order to find synonyms for terms, try using an online dictionary or thesaurus, such as:
- Oxford English Dictionary
- Webster’s Dictionary
- Roget’s Thesaurus

Part II: Performing Research
1. Once you have determined the purpose of your paper and the type of research you need to do, you can start looking for information. There are many ways of performing research, depending on what type of information you need and what sources you will use. This section will explain how to: identify different types of resources, use the classification systems commonly found in a library, and refine your searching techniques for more useful results.

2. Find the Right Kind of Sources: When doing research it is beneficial to understand the strengths and weaknesses of different types of sources. Although specific topics may be best explained by a particular source (for example, periodicals are a good place to find information on current events) it is always a good idea to use
a variety of sources in your research. This will give you an array of diverse perspectives and will allow you to gain a better understanding of your subject.

There are several types of sources, such as books, periodicals, electronic databases and the Internet. In the following pages you can examine each type individually and learn searching techniques that can be used in databases and on the Internet to yield more useful results.

3. Organize Your Information: The research process can be complicated. As you begin researching, it is important that you keep track of what you find (even if you don't end up using it all).

Important Tips:

a. It is very important to keep track of the exact place you found your information.
b. Save yourself time by making a full citation of each source you use while doing research. You are now ready to cite information inside your paper.