



RESEARCHING YOUR ESSAY IN 10 EASY STEPS

When searching for materials:

1. *Read over your assignment sheet* for clues about where to start, key words for your search, limitations of your search, even for names of relevant articles.
2. *List what you already know about the topic* from general knowledge and from what has been covered in the course materials. This will help you with your key word search in the library.
3. *Look at your course text for names of authors* who have written in that field. When you look them up in the library catalogue you may find that they have also written on your specific topic.
4. *Search the library website for special data bases* that are on designated computers in Huron library. Some of these sources contain whole texts of articles that you can then print off.

When reading the materials you have gathered

5. *Make bibliographical index files on your computer for each article or book* that you have assembled. Put all the bibliographical data in this file. This will save you a lot of time and trouble when you are creating your *Works Cited* or *References* page.
6. *Hi-light ideas in each paper you have gathered.* When hi-lighting ideas in a paper, write a key word beside the idea indicating why it seems to be important (e.g. Civil War: Economic Causes). This will help you retrieve information later. If you decide to cut and paste materials, do so into your Notes or Bibliographical index file. Note the page number and be sure to put quotation marks around the pasted material
7. *Transfer relevant quotes, statistics, and summarized ideas into a notes file* after you have read and hi-lighted all the materials you have gathered. Remember to put quotation marks around all ideas that are not yours, and to note down the number of the page where you found the information.

8. *Put any ideas you have about the information in square brackets after the quoted or summarized material.*
 - Ex. [this is information is similar to something else you have read, or this explains a problem raised in another reading, or this contradicts something else]. This information is the beginning of your first draft of your essay.

When organizing your research

9. *Organize your points/notes into common themes or ideas.* You may have to try this out two or three times. Don't be afraid to play with the categories until you are satisfied that you actually do have some common threads.
10. *Create a working thesis based on the topics that you have created.* Remember that the thesis has to incorporate the breadth of research you have done. If you can't create a thesis that does this, you might want to go back to your piles and play some more, or you may have to put some of the research aside while you write your first draft.