

Getting Started

Getting started is difficult for many students, whether you don't know what topic you should research, or you don't know enough about the topic to proceed. Choose the situation below that would be the most helpful for you.



Resources for topic ideas

If you have no idea what topic to choose, or if you want to see what's out there to help you settle on a topic, click or tap "More."

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Analyzing the topic

If you have a research topic or question, the next step is thinking through what information you will need to gather.

[More](#)

Understanding the assignment

Stress and anxiety about getting started with research can be due to not understanding what is expected of you.

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Building understanding

Unless you are already an expert, you are probably going to have to do some "pre-research" to understand the topic better.

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Resources for Topic Ideas

If topic choice is wide open to you, these databases each have topic brainstorming tools and lists to give you ideas. Click or tap to visit each database, or find them in the A-Z Database list on the EOU Library website.



Oposing Viewpoints

Oposing Viewpoints is a popular Gale database that pulls together background information and pro & con viewpoints about current social issues.



SIRS Issues Researcher

Delivers the pros and cons on current complex social issues. Critical issues and enduring social issues are covered through full-text articles, multimedia, primary sources, government documents and reference material.



Credo Reference

Credo Reference is a general reference solution for learners and librarians. Its full-text, aggregated content covers every major subject from the world's best publishers of reference.



Find A Topic (Newsbank)

Find information in newspaper articles for research assignments on all topics including business, criminal justice, education, environmental studies, health, international studies, performing and fine arts, political science, religion, science, social issues and technology.

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Analyzing the Topic

Often we want to just type our topic into a search engine and start scrolling, but if you put some thought into it before you search, your process will be much easier, and your sources will be more relevant.

Background information provides context and defines concepts readers may not be familiar with.

What concepts in your paper require context, clarification, or definition?

What evidence do you need? Pay attention to the expectations of your instructor, and to specific assignment instructions.



Break up your research question. A good research question has more than one concept, and each concept may have multiple facets.

Start to outline your paper before you even search for sources. Think about the type of sources you would want in each section of the paper, and what information they would contain.

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Understanding the Assignment

It is important to ensure that you fully understand the assignment instructions and the expectations of your instructor before you begin researching and writing. An analysis of the assignment instructions will help you to know the types of sources that are expected, the style of writing that you should use, as well as the format and structure of the paper or project.

Audience

Keeping your audience in mind while you write can help you make good decisions about what material to include, how to organize your ideas, and how best to support your argument. A scholarly audience, such as your instructor, will likely expect scholarly sources.

Purpose

This can help you determine what types of sources are most appropriate, whether the purpose is to investigate a historical event, write about an experiment, or make an argument. If the purpose is not clear, ask your instructor. They are your best guide as to the types of sources you should use.

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Scholarly sources:

If your assignment requires these, and you're not sure what they are, go to Scholarly Sources in the tutorial main menu.



Peer-reviewed articles:

If your assignment requires these, and you're not sure what they are, go to Peer-Review in the tutorial main menu.

Background Information

Reference sources are a good place to start because they provide definitions, context, and history about topics. These sources include encyclopedias, handbooks, and dictionaries. If you are researching a topic that you don't know much about, these tools can help you build your understanding. These are just a few to help you get started. For more, look for the "Reference" link on the library website.



Credo Reference

This tool combines articles from over 1000 different encyclopedias and other reference sources.



Oxford Reference

Contains a wealth of facts, figures, definitions, and translations from 170+ Oxford reference titles.



Oregon Encyclopedia

Learn about the people, places, events, and institutions that define the history and culture of Oregon.



Britannica Online

Contains hundreds of thousands of articles, biographies, videos, images and websites for a variety of subjects.



Cambridge Histories

A resource for History researchers, ranging in subject matter from late antiquity to the present day.



Encyclopedias in the library

Use the Ask a Librarian links on the library website to get recommendations for subject-specific encyclopedias on your topic.

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Writing Your Introduction

The introduction of your paper should generally accomplish two things besides identifying your topic, thesis, argument, or hypothesis: provide a road map for what the reader will find in the paper, and give some background context about the topic. This may come in the form of a high level overview, or a more formal literature review.

Background Information

Part of why you write a research paper is to demonstrate that you understand the topic in the context of the class. Even though your instructor may already know all about the topic, you should include background information to define concepts and provide context.

Literature Review

A literature review is a part of a scholarly paper in which researchers summarize and cite the research on the topic that has come before in order to show where their research fits in to the big picture. Sometimes instructors will ask you to do the same as part of your introduction.

Background

If you need background information, click on the Background button to jump to that page, and learn where to find it.

Scholarly Literature

Your instructor should give you guidelines on how to write a literature review. Usually the sources used in a literature review are scholarly and peer-reviewed. Click the Scholarly Literature button to jump to the page on scholarly sources.