

RESEARCH WORKSHEET

Use this "form" to help you organize your project research. If you do your "thinking" first you will save lots of time and frustration. The process the following steps support is called "The Big 6" and refers to the six steps we all use to solve "information problems". Your "problem" is usually the project you have to research.

Take the time to develop your understanding of the process so your efforts are productive.

- 1. TASK DEFINITION.** Define your information problem & identify the information needed to complete your task.

In this area, write out a list of questions which you need to answer in order to solve your "problem". Try to think through all the aspects of what you need to discover about your topic and then write these things out as questions. Try to come up with at least four or five.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

- 2. INFORMATION SEEKING STRATEGIES.** Brainstorm then determine the range of possible sources and prioritize them with respect to their value, availability, and content.

This section is to help you decide what TYPES of sources, WHERE they are located, and WHICH ones SPECIFICALLY you need to locate. Think about the types of information you need and then identify the types of sources which would most likely contain it. Be sure to consider the reliability of the sources before listing them. Below this box are some suggested sources. Now, make your own list of where you want to go. Do you know which ones your library owns or subscribes to?

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|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| BOOKS or REFERENCE SOURCES | School library? Public library? Interlibrary Loan? | PRIMARY SOURCES | Letters? Speeches? Photos? Diaries? |
| NEWSPAPERS | Library – hard copy? Online databases? Online web site? | MAGAZINES | Library – hard copy? Online databases? Online web site? |
| PEOPLE/INTERVIEWS | Personal contact? Telephone directory? Friend of a friend? | WEB SITES | Commercial? Personal? Organization? Military Government? School? |

3. **LOCATE & ACCESS INFORMATION.** Locate sources and find specific information within the sources.

In the boxes below, list nine terms - words or phrases - which would be used in documents referring to your research topic. These can be very specific or general, yet used in conjunction with your topic. These are the "search terms" which will be found in indexes, library catalogs, and on web pages which relate to your needed information.

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► At this point you need to do the searching! You need to:

- Consult the **Library Catalog** (in your school and other online library catalogs from which you can interlibrary loan.)
- Search in **periodical databases** for articles relevant to each aspect of your research needs.
- Use **unique search tools** - special search engines or web sites or reference sources - which direct you to information relevant to your research needs.

4. **USE OF INFORMATION.** Engage the information (read, hear, view, touch) and extract relevant information from your sources.

This is where and when you start reading the materials you find and take notes! Be sure to document where you find the information. Clearly identify what you are quoting and what you summarize and put into your own words. Keep track of ALL sources you consult and take information from, no matter how trivial the information. Use note cards or a notebook to keep track of your notes and information retrieved. If you use web sources, be sure to print out at least the first page for your records! You will need the complete web address and date you visited the online source for any citations.

5. **SYTHESIS.** Organize and present your information.

At some point you need to start putting your information and ideas together for presentation. You are creating a new information source when you do this. You take what you have learned and synthesize it into something that is unique to your project goals. So, explain what you want to do with the information. In what format do you need to present it and how will it be organized?

6. **EVALUATION.** Judge the product (effectiveness) and judge the process (efficiency).

This part of the process doesn't happen at the end, but is something that you do continuously throughout your research. Judging the product and the process applies to the sources you look at as well as the final presentation of your research. If you effectively evaluate what you are doing as you go along, your final product will be of a higher quality and have more impact than if you take the first things you see and fail to examine them carefully.