Five Step Research Process

1. Review the assignment or identify the research question or topic
2. Identify appropriate resources
3. Create search strategies
4. Analyze and evaluate content and authority of resources
5. Ethically use the information and cite all sources
Step 1: Review the assignment or identify the research question or topic
Start by fully reviewing all information in the assignment or research topic.

- If you have questions on the assignment or topic, please connect with the course professor for clarification. Asking for clarification at the beginning will help you avoid frustrations later.

Step 2: Identify appropriate resources
The topic you are researching will help determine where you look.

- The library’s research databases are a great place to start searching. In the databases you can find peer reviewed publications, trade publications, e-books, and more.
- Do consider government resources (statistical and demographic information). As with the selection of any source, be sure to verify the assignment parameters.
- It is also a positive option here to remember to write down, or use a tracking mechanism, the sources you select. This will save time in the end when you are writing and citing.

Step 3: Create search strategies
Identify the search terms to use for your topic. Write down variations of pairings you can alternate if needed during your research.

- Review course materials for possible search term ideas.

It is recommended you start in a database by selecting the Advanced Search option. This provides an opportunity to select specific ways to search your keywords.

- Use quotation marks when you search around common phrases. This tells the database to find those search terms together, which can help refine the results. For example try searching: “college athlete”.
- Review the many filters you can set, like peer reviewed, publication date range, document type, etc.
- Explore the Thesaurus or Subject area for related words to search.

Step 4: Analyze and evaluate content and authority
Always review the content of the material and authority.

- Some points to consider in reviewing: the type of publication (peer reviewed, newspaper, trade publication, etc.), date of material, author’s credentials and specialty area, context of the information, etc.

Step 5: Ethically use the information and cite all sources
As a participant in the academic community, you have a duty to respect the intellectual property of others.

- Citing information correctly provides acknowledgement to the author, as well a trail for others to follow your research.