

1. Research Mechanics and Writing Fundamentals

If your students are newcomers to conducting research and you want to give them background into the fundamental mechanics of research, including a general overview of common research processes and methods, writing basics, and source types, refer to:

- Video: Creating a Research Plan
- Video: Pre-Research
- Video: In-depth Research, Outlining, and Writing
- Video: Primary and Secondary Research
- Video: How to Read Scholarly Materials
- Video: Anatomy of a Research Paper
- Video: Source Types
- Video: Types of Sources
- Video: Writing Help

DISCUSSION TOPIC

Writing Skills

What are some skills that you can utilize to improve your writing? Can you list the elements and steps of the writing process? Take a minute to outline your own personal writing process. What are your good habits? What about your bad habits? Does any part of this process strike you as being more helpful than others? How can honing good writing habits impact your everyday life? Where can you go to get help with your writing assignments on campus? What should you expect from a help session? What should you come prepared with?

ACTIVITIES

Primary Research

Has anyone done primary research? Have students share experiences about how the experience was valuable and/or what they wish they knew at the beginning of the process. Students may have conducted interviews, created surveys, or worked in a lab. How do these experiences inform their assumptions about research? How do students view other research methods outside their chosen field?

Give students the same simple matrix of data and ask them to make up a story explaining the data. Have students compare their developed narratives and discuss any similarities or discrepancies in their understandings.

Assignment Requirements

Using either a real assignment or an imaginary assignment, have the students discuss the assignment requirements. Have them brainstorm in small groups about potential “unwritten” requirements, such as the time spent on various assignment activities, preparation, background research for unfamiliar concepts, etc.

Tour of the Library

An alternative to the traditional library tour is a self-guided group tour. Students are placed in small groups, each of which is assigned a library section/floor/department to explore. Students make observations about organizational patterns, signage, technology, layout, desks, library staff, etc. Upon returning to the classroom, have groups give short “pop” presentations about what they discovered, with the instructor correcting and/or adding to student observations.

Scavenger Hunt

Use the library’s website and/or open web search engines for activities such as citation “hopping” or “linking” in order to trace back sources.

Scavenger hunts also can be set up within the library building space using a theme or narrative: students as explorers, themes related to class subject or discipline, school history, local interests, etc. Scavenger hunts can focus on one department or area of the library, such as reference or periodicals.