



VIEW TEACHING GUIDES

1. RESEARCH PLANNING AND FUNDAMENTALS

If your students are newcomers to conducting research and you want to give them background into the fundamentals, including a general overview of common research processes and methods, tips for early research, and source types, refer to:

- Primary and Secondary Research
- Anatomy of a Research Paper
- Creating a Research Plan
- Framing a Problem
- Getting Started with Wikipedia/Google
- Transitioning from Google/Wikipedia to Databases

DISCUSSION TOPIC

Research Planning

Information overload can be a major roadblock in the research process. This discussion will help students conceptualize a research pathway and brainstorm solutions to common research challenges.

Begin by asking students to consider a recent research project. What was the topic? How did they develop a research question and locate sources? Next, have the students form pairs to discuss their common research setbacks to share with the group. Based on student input, come up with a list of common challenges and ask students to brainstorm solutions.

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.

Research Planning

To prevent frustration or information overload, it’s a good idea to use a research roadmap. Help students work through common sticking points by creating an if/then map to guide their research process. This activity can be completed on a whiteboard with the whole class, or students can complete it individually on paper.

First ask students to identify the key stages of research. For each stage, have students create a checklist of tasks they already should have completed (for example, before diving into background research, students should have reviewed their research assignment and identified key topics and subtopics). Provide additional research challenges (like encountering a contradictory argument) and ask students to come up with solutions using a flow chart.

Framing a Problem

If your students are having trouble formulating a research question for assignments, start with a short discussion using a timely or popular topic such as technology or entertainment (e.g. free tuition to four-year college proposals or the effects of smartphones on interpersonal relationships). Students should form small groups to discuss the following questions:

- What do you already know about the topic?
- What else would you like to know about the topic?
- Have any personal experiences influenced the way you interpret the topic?



Next, have each group come up with one open-ended question and one close-ended question related to their topic to share with the class.