

Transcript of the video *Big Redsearch Cycle*

Our Big Redsearch Cycle is an introduction to the research process. This is the cycle we suggest you follow to search and write for papers, projects and other assignments. It is our hope that by following the Big Redsearch Cycle, you will plan for your assignment; choose the right tools; search effectively; and write, review, and turn in a project you are proud of!

Okay, just to clarify, the purpose of research is to find specific information about a particular topic.

For example: “The student had to research the history of the Second World War for their history project;” or “Scientists are exploring the nature of consciousness....”

Now how do we find useful information for our assignments?

Let’s get down to the step-by-step cycle of the Big Redsearch Cycle.

Step 1: Identify what you need to find out and how you will present your findings. Check the requirements of the assignment, and if available, look at the grading guide also. Are you clear on your topic? How broad is the topic? Do you need to narrow it down? What kind of report do you need to write? Can it be in a format other than a paper, such as digital storytelling, a web page, or a blog? Are you supposed to give a well-rounded viewpoint? Pros and cons? When you have a clear topic and know their requirements, the research will be much easier.

Step 2: Define search tools. Keep your goals for the project in mind. Writing a two-page review takes much less time and research than writing a 20-page term paper! Plan time to find the right stuff. It’s Okay to start with Google to help you find good search terms or keywords. Think about the topic and the key terms that are used in your textbooks or in your professor’s lectures. How about your class notes and additional readings? When you have your key terms, think about which resources to use. Put together a research tool kit.

The requirements of the assignment should help you choose the right kind of sources. Do you need scholarly, peer-reviewed articles or more general information? How about books, newspapers or journal articles? Can you use Websites? If you need help finding resources for your topic, check out WKU Libraries’ Research Guides. Preparing your research tool kit will make the process go more smoothly.

Okay, now you have a topic and requirements, a timeline, possible resources, and more importantly, search terms that will help you find what you are looking for. You are ready for Step 3.

Step 3: Outline the major points and ideas for the topic and the basic resources from your research tool kit. Are you following an outline provided by your instructor or are you creating one yourself? The outline gives you a framework that will make the next step more effective.

Okay, the outline is ready, now what?

Step 4: Search authoritative sources. What are “authoritative sources?” Material published by experts in the field. This is where you’ll use your research tool kit and search terms to find the right information.

For example, you can find books and e-books using TOPCAT, the Libraries' online catalog. You can find print journal articles in Periodicals at Helm Library or online in our many research databases, or with our e-journal finder. These and many other "authoritative sources" can be found in the WKU Libraries' Research Guides. And remember: don't skimp on your sources. A good variety will make your paper stronger!

Step 5: Writing your paper. Revisit Step 3. Have you correctly cited all your sources? Need help with the citations? Are your introduction and conclusion clear? There are lots of good resources online to help you with the writing process. The more organized you are, the better the project.

Step 6: Review to see if you've met all the requirements. Go back to Step 1. (Didn't I say re-d-search cycle?) Re-read what you have written. Does it make sense? To avoid plagiarism, make sure you've correctly cited your sources. Check, correct, check again. Go back to any step to improve your final draft. Are you satisfied?

There's a lot more to successful research than just these six steps. Breathe a sigh of relief and remember: librarians at WKU Libraries are always here to help you. Don't hesitate to Ask Us! Thanks for watching!