

Starting your research

- Choose your topic. Make sure it is not too broad or too narrow.
 - Gain background information by looking at reference works.
 - Read the current literature on that topic in the form of books, journal articles and relevant websites.
 - Revise topic if necessary
 - Write paper
1. Reference works: Gain an understanding of your topic if you are not familiar with it. Reference works such as dictionaries and Encyclopedias can be helpful to find background information on your topic and give you keywords. For online encyclopedias, try www.encyclopedia.com or www.en.wikipedia.com Encyclopedias cannot be used as sources in your paper. They are only to help you get started.
 2. Tips on Searching: Use, keywords, subject headings and boolean searching to guide your search.
 3. Books: Use our catalog www.rc.edu/lib to search for books. Use the WORLDCAT database to see if a book you need is at another library. Use the netLibrary database to find online books. Cite online books just as you would print books.
 4. Find journal articles: Use pick-a-topic to narrow down the databases to search. Wilson Select Plus, Academic Search Elite and JSTOR are some good general databases.
 5. Refining your search: You may have to narrow or broaden your search depending on the number of hits you get. Use techniques like truncating, using an abstract search, using a descriptor (subject) search.
 6. Finding articles that aren't full-text: Click on Journal Search. Use the Journal Titles A-Z Search to look for journal holdings at Rochester College. You can get an article through interlibrary loan if we don't have it.
 7. Relevant Websites: If your topic would be enhanced by consulting an authoritative website then use it. Examples would be government documents, organizations, companies, etc. Make sure and evaluated the website for: authority, audience, currency, content, and sources.
 8. Need help?: At any point please come see a Librarian for help. That's what we are here for. You can call, email or IM us, or just stop by.
 9. Scholarly vs. Popular Journals <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill20.html>