

University of Houston Clear Lake

WRITING CENTER

Tips on Conducting Research

1. Decide on topic categories for your search before you begin. Write them down and check each source consistently for all of the topics and/or key words.
2. Decide what types of works you will look for: interviews, articles, research studies, reviews, etc. Begin with a broad list and then eliminate as you narrow your topic.
3. Look at reviews of significant texts to see how they were received. Current journals will publish these. Library journals also publish book reviews.
4. Don't forget doctoral dissertations as sources of current research.
5. Know your style manual so you recognize various types of publications by the way they are referenced. You will need this information to ensure that you cite the source appropriately.
6. Record each citation using the style appropriate to your field to save time later on.
7. Find out which bibliographies provide references in your field. Write down the names of these bibliographies and check them off as you complete your search.
8. Find out about all databases that may supply you with resources. Write down the name of each database and check it off as you complete your search.
9. Find out about paper indices or reference works in your field. Write down the names of these resources and check them off as you complete your search.
10. Become familiar with all of the above reference sources so you know how to find information and know which ones are most helpful for specific projects.
11. Expand acronyms or abbreviations when you write down citations so you don't have to look up full names later.
12. Find out which journals are devoted to your subject matter and review the last two to three years' publications so you are familiar with the current discussion.
13. Check footnotes and the works cited or reference sections in articles and books on your topic for additional sources.
14. Check publishers' catalogues, reviews, library journals, and Books in Print for additional sources.
15. Alternate your time between finding sources, locating them, and reading and writing notes so you don't become fatigued by the repetitive nature of these tasks.
16. Take meticulous notes all the way through this process so you don't have to repeat it.

17. If you can't find a work, request it through interlibrary loan. Make these requests early to allow plenty of time for materials to arrive. (You can access interlibrary loan forms on the UHCL library website.)
18. Look in second-hand bookstores for used copies of important books that may be out of print. Houston has several good academic used bookstores.
19. Write brief commentary-style annotations for each article you review. Writing these will help you remember each article and decide whether you will be able to use it in your text. Commentary-style annotations describe what the text does without making value judgments. (Typical commentary-style verbs include "demonstrates," "asserts," "speculates," "supposes," and "proves.")
20. When writing annotations, make sure verb tense and voice remain consistent. Edit for wordiness.