

The Research Process

a step by step guide



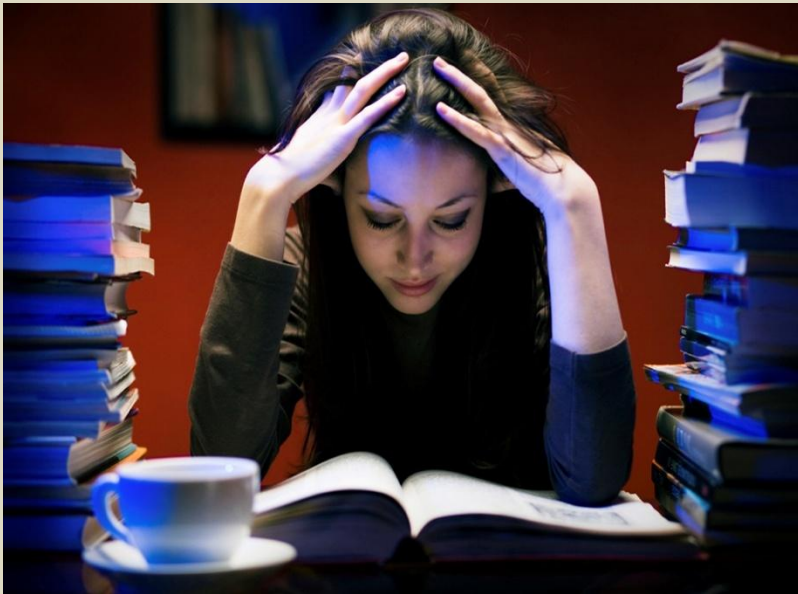
Module 1: Determining the Research Purpose



Ocean County
College Library
Toms River, NJ

Spring 2010

Rule #1: Don't be overwhelmed



Starting a new research project can be daunting, but don't be discouraged.

This guide will show you how to break a research project down into its component parts (and hopefully make it more manageable).



The guide is divided into two modules:

Module 1:

- Step 1: Determining your research purpose
- Step 2: Determining your audience
- Step 3: Determining your requirements and limitations

Module 2:

- Step 4: Investigating a topic
- Step 5: Refining a topic

Feel free to go through the modules
at your own pace



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at your own pace



And remember you can
stop by the library for
further assistance on any of
the topics covered.

First Step: Determine your research purpose

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Ask yourself if your project is designed to:

- Inform an audience about a topic?
- Persuade an audience to your opinion?
- Be a critique or analysis?
- Another purpose?

First Step:

Determine your research purpose

This is important because different resources are better for different project types.

First Step:

Determine your research purpose

For example,

if your purpose is to ***inform*** an audience about a topic, then unbiased, factual information may be most appropriate



First Step: Determine your research purpose

However,

if your purpose is to *persuade* an audience, then you may need targeted information that supports your opinion



Second Step: Determine your audience

Second Step: Determine your audience

Ask yourself who will see/read/hear your work

- Your professor?
- Your classmates?
- Your colleagues?
- Others?



Second Step: Determine your audience

Then, ask yourself what kind of information will interest or influence them:



Second Step: Determine your audience

Understanding what may influence your audience will help you target the **types** of resources to use, such as:

- Current research
- Peer Reviewed articles
- Works by notable scholars
- Statistics

Third Step: Determine your requirements and limitations

Research projects often come with deadlines and other parameters that affect your work

Third Step: Determine your requirements and limitations

- **Due dates**

Due dates influence how much time you have to invest in researching

You have more options and opportunities with a longer deadline. (So don't procrastinate!)



Third Step: Determine your requirements and limitations

- **Page lengths**

Page lengths may influence how much research and how many sources you need

A 1 page response paper may require fewer sources than a 50 page honors thesis

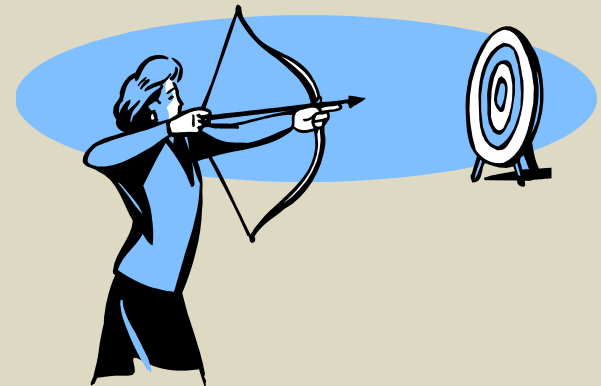


Third Step: Determine your requirements and limitations

- **Required/Suggested/Prohibited sources**

When given an assignment, you may be told which types of sources to use or ***not*** to use.

This may seem like a hindrance, but it may help you target your research



Before moving on...

Let's review. You should first:

- determine your topic purpose
- determine your audience
- and review your requirements and limitations

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- determine your audience
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If you still have questions on these elements,
you may want to reread and analyze your
assignment.

Analyzing the assignment

Let's break an assignment into
its component parts

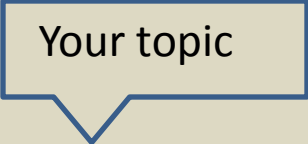
Analyzing the assignment

Example assignment:

In this assignment, you will research Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among veterans. Research the history of the disorder, as well as its causes, symptoms, and treatments. Your paper is due in one month's time and should be 8-10 pages in length. You may use your textbook as a source, but do not use Wikipedia.

Analyzing the assignment

Example assignment:

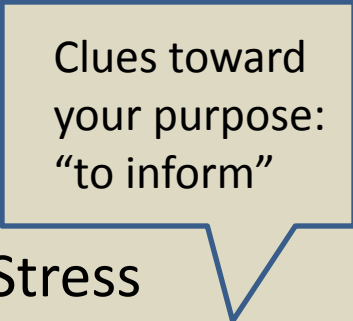


Your topic

In this assignment, you will research **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among veterans**. Research the history of the disorder, as well as its causes, symptoms, and treatments. Your paper is due in one month's time and should be 8-10 pages in length. You may use your textbook as a source, but do not use Wikipedia.

Analyzing the assignment

Example assignment:



Clues toward
your purpose:
“to inform”

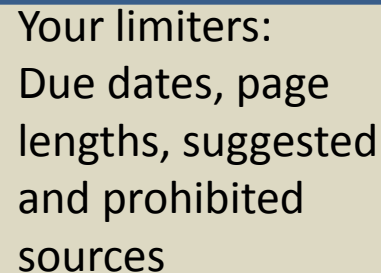
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Your limiters:
Due dates, page
lengths, suggested
and prohibited
sources

Analyzing the assignment

Now let's take a look at the topic itself:

Ask yourself:

- What do I already know about the topic?
- What do I still need to find out?

Congratulations!

You've completed Module 1!
Now continue on to Module 2
for the next steps



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