

# The Research Process

## a step by step guide

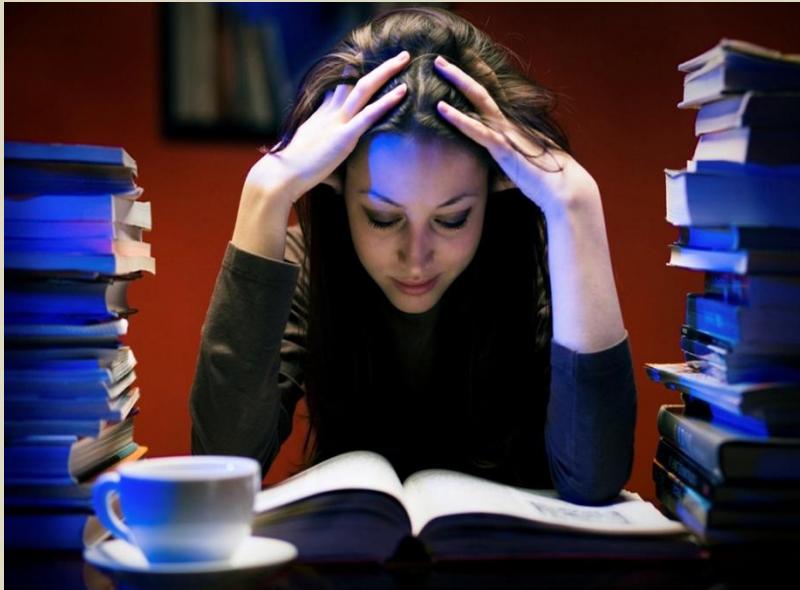
Module 1:  
Determining the  
Research Purpose



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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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

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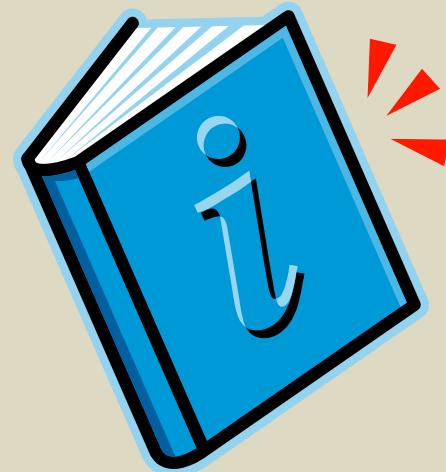
This is important because different resources are better for different project types.

# First Step: Determine your research purpose

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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

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However,

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



# Second Step: Determine your audience

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Ask yourself who will see/read/hear your work

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



# Second Step: Determine your audience

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



# Second Step: Determine your audience

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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

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

# Third Step: Determine your requirements and limitations

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- **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

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- **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

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- **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
- And review your requirements and limitations

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

# Analyzing the assignment

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Let's break an assignment into  
its component parts

# Analyzing the assignment

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## 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

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Example assignment:

Your topic

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# Analyzing the assignment

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Clues toward  
your purpose:  
“to inform”

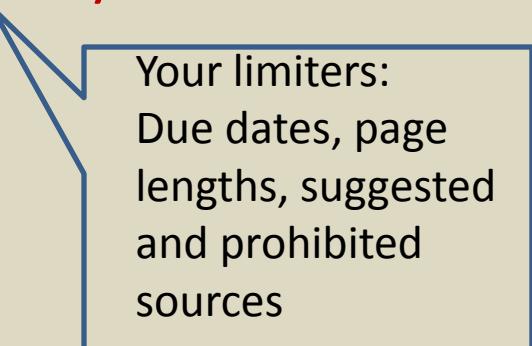
# Analyzing the assignment

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

# Analyzing the assignment

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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?

# Analyzing the assignment

If you don't know much about the topic, start with some basic research for your own information:





Dictionaries and encyclopedias are great for defining or explaining concepts



# Congratulations!

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



Designed by  
Caitlyn Cook  
Ocean County College  
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