



The Betty East Tutoring Center at Victoria College

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Research: Gather and Evaluate Information

Gathering information from your sources is part of the pre-writing stage. Your research should be complete and organized before you begin writing your paper. Remember, before you commit to a topic, that you cannot pick and choose sources just because you do not agree with some of them. Also, you may find that there is not enough research about a topic to support your paper. In this case, you will need to choose a different topic.

Brainstorm:

First, write down your topic. Then, write down what you want to know more of about this topic.

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Next, write down as many answers as you know to these questions BEFORE you begin researching your topic:

Questions	Your Answer
What are the details of the topic?	
Who is this topic important to?	
Are there vocabulary or unique words?	
What do experts think about your topic?	
Who (people, organizations) or what (journals, databases) might have information about your topic?	
What key words will you need to use in your search to narrow down your results?	

Now, you are ready to begin your research.

Research:

Preliminary Research:

During this stage you will look through encyclopedias, magazine and newspaper articles, autobiographies, handbooks, and other generalized or specialized reference works. Your goal is to focus your topic and narrow it down while learning more about it. Try to make your topic as specific as possible. This will help you make a

specific thesis statement during the writing process. Your thesis statement is the foundation for your entire paper.

Not all of these sources may be academic and scholarly, so you cannot use all of them in your paper. But, these sources will help you have a fuller understanding of your topic and may lead you in the right direction.

General Research:

General research involves looking through books, journals and magazines, and websites. The goal now is to deepen your understanding of your topic and to develop specific questions that you can research further. These questions should be questions you anticipate your readers having, so you can answer them in your paper.

Again, all of the sources may not be included in your paper. You must decide whether or not the source is appropriate for your topic, audience, and purpose.

Specialized Research:

During specialized research, examine scholarly articles from academic journals, databases, government documents/collections, and online indexes. If appropriate, you can interview relevant experts to your topic during this stage. The goal of this stage is to gather a set of appropriate information sources that you can use in your paper.

By now you have analyzed your topic and learned about the stages of research. The next step is to decide what kind of sources you will need. All sources for academic papers must come from scholarly, academic sources.