Researching Tips

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Do a **close reading** of the assignment:

- Analyze purpose: What is the assignment asking you to do? How? What is required?

**Brainstorm** ideas: what do you care about? Follow your passion and interests. Find your way in.

This will make for a MUCH better experience and a MUCH better paper.

**Preliminary research** is a part of brainstorming. Some places to look for primary and secondary sources:

- Library catalog
- **Databases:** *Ebscohost, Academic Search Complete*, and ________________
- Possible sources: NCTE website and conferences, library study guides, journals in the field, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and ________________

The art of **key words** (speak the search engine’s language).

- Take a guess.
- Use the language of the prompt.
- Take the search engine’s suggestions.
- Skim abstracts and keywords of initial findings.

A truth of preliminary research: **one search is not enough**.

Too many findings? Strategies for **narrow your search**:

- Limit searches to peer reviewed sources only.
- Limit the date or language of materials.

“**Mine**” (excavate, explore, sift, etc.) your findings.

- Discover the conversation by examining the title, introduction/context, and thesis.
- Discover other authors who are part of the conversation by reviewing the bibliography/WC page.

**Sketch out** the conversation and indicate what questions remain.

- What is left out? Who is left out?

Authors never try to have the LAST word; they always leave room for more.

**Join in.** How can you **apply, critique, extend, or refute** others’ ideas in the conversation? (Hint: how do others do so?)

**Resources:** Librarians, Library Study Guides, Virtual Librarians, and the Writing Center staff