

Researching Tips

By Dr. Sara Beam, RSU Writing Center Coordinator

Do a close reading of the assignment:

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

Analyze audience: Who? When? Where? What do they care about? What will convince them?

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