

Research Overview Handout

What is research and why do I need it?

Research is the process by which we find answers to questions. Good research begins with a question. Research is needed to gain knowledge of, or supplement a lack of knowledge on, a specific topic. Many topics you choose to write on may have a large amount of information that you are unaware of and cannot be found without research.

What are the different styles of documentation and citation?

If your professor designates a particular style, it is most likely tied to his or her area of expertise. If you have the choice, it is often a good idea to practice in what will be your field of expertise.

MLA	Modern Language Association	English, Fine Arts
APA	American Psychological Association	Nursing, Business, Social Sciences
Chicago	also called Turabian Style	History
AP	Associated Press	Journalism

You can find helpful links and information on these different styles at the Writing Center's website, <http://www.una.edu/writingcenter/writing-resources.html>. Remember, research-based writing in American institutions is filled with rules that writers, particularly beginners, aren't always aware of or don't know how to follow. Learning these different styles and what they are used for will help to eliminate the risk of plagiarism.

What kind of information are you looking for?

The research methods you use may be varied depending upon which topic you choose, so it is important to make this distinction. Do you want facts, opinions, news, reports, or research studies? Determining which of these, or which combination of these, you will need will help you to find the information with greater ease.

What tools do you have?

Libraries, internet databases, academic journals, and newspapers are just a few of the sources available to you. Remember, Wikipedia and websites with .com, .net, or .org are not written by academic professionals and therefore may not meet your professor's standards for academic research. Collier Library offers many online databases for research and students, faculty, and staff have access to the databases from off-campus with your UNA Portal log-in. Collier Library also offers a great feature called "Ask A Librarian" that allows students to ask questions such as you might ask in person at the Information Desk. Examples include help with incomplete citations, location of an address, and a brief list of suggested sources for researching topics. Responses are sent to you by e-mail.

References:

Driscoll, D. L. (2007). Research: Overview. Retrieved October 13, 2009 from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/552/01/>
<http://www.una.edu/library/help/asklibrarian.html>