SEVEN STEPS TO GREAT RESEARCH

Developing a basic search strategy enables you to research a specific topic in an organized manner. Suggested steps, tips, and examples are listed below and librarians are always available to assist you.

Seven Steps to Great Research
1. Identify & develop your topic.
2. Find background information.
3. Locate books using the catalog.
4. Locate articles using databases.
5. Find Internet resources.
6. Evaluate what you have found.
7. Revise your search as necessary.

Identify & Develop Your Topic
Be prepared to be flexible with your topic! If it is too broad or vague, you will find too much information and will need to narrow your topic. If it is too specific, you will not find enough information and will need to broaden your topic.

Find Background Information
Background information is used to gain a deeper understanding of your topic. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and handbooks are all examples of reference resources you can use to locate background information. Reference resources are available on the Select Resource Collections page of the Virtual Library.

Locate Books
Books provide broader and more in-depth coverage of subjects than do articles, although information will not be the most current. You can locate books and electronic books (e-books) using IvyCat, the Ivy Tech library catalog. E-books are also located on the Select Resource Collections page of the Virtual Library.

Locate Articles
Magazine, journal, and newspaper articles provide current information about a topic. Journal articles (also called scholarly or peer-reviewed) will cover specific fields of research. Popular magazines and newspapers publish articles of general interest and current events. Article databases are available on the Select Resource Collections page and MultiSearch through the Virtual Library.

Find Internet Resources
It is recommended that you use the library resources to find Internet sites that are suitable for academic research. IvyLynks, located on the main Virtual Library page, contains collections of websites selected by Ivy Tech librarians. Links to websites are also included in the library resource guides.

Evaluate What You Have Found
Before you use a book, article, or web site for your paper or speech, evaluate its usefulness for your particular research needs. Apply the following criteria to your source:

- **Purpose:** Was the resource written to inform, present opinions, report research or sell products?
- **Authority:** What are the author's credentials?
- **Accuracy:** Is the information correct and free from errors?
- **Timeliness:** Is the information current enough?
- **Coverage:** Does the source cover the topic in depth or is it a broad overview?
- **Objectivity:** Does the information show bias or does it present multiple viewpoints?

Revise Your Search
After evaluating the resources you found, you must decide if you have enough information to complete your assignment. If not, you can broaden your topic and search for additional resources using new key words. If you have questions about revising your search, a librarian can assist you.

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