Grand Island High School
Library Media Center

The Six Steps to the Research Process

The following six step outline is used to guide students through the research process. It is a simple and effective strategy for finding information for a research paper and documenting the sources. Depending on the topic and their familiarity with the library, they may need to rearrange or recycle these steps. I can introduce or review the research process with your students as well as providing lessons focusing on each step in the research process. Topics could include:

- Searching the OPAC
- Searching databases
- Using search engines effectively
- Web site evaluation
- APA format
- Noodle Tools
- Turn It In
- Plagiarism, copyright, and Fair Use

Step 1: Task Definition

What is the problem you are trying to solve? State your topic as a question. For example, if you are interested in finding out about use of alcoholic beverages by college students, you might pose the question, "What effect does use of alcoholic beverages have on the health of students?" What information will you need to answer the question? Identify the main concepts or keywords in your question.

Step 2: Information Seeking Strategies

Brainstorm a list of possible sources of information. Consider all types of sources: print, Web sites, and databases.

Step 3: Location and Access

Locate the sources and access the information within the sources.

Search the OPAC to find books and media. Use keyword searching for a narrow or complex search topic. Use subject searching for a broad subject. Print or write down the citation (author, title, etc.) and the location information (call

number). Note the circulation status. When you pull the book from the shelf, scan the bibliography for additional sources.

Use databases and the periodical rack to find journal articles. Find periodical articles by the article author, title, or keyword by looking at the online databases we subscribe to or by browsing our journal rack. Make sure you have the passwords to access the databases.

Find Internet Resources
Use search engines and subject directories to locate materials on the Web. Remember to evaluate them to determine if they are relevant and accurate. Check out this website (http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/eval.html) for suggestions.

Step 4: Use of Information

Read, view, or listen to the source to find relevant information. Record and organize this information by taking notes or making an outline.

Remember that you will need to cite all the information you have found using the APA format. Locate and note the information that will be needed to create the citations. Citing or documenting the sources used in your research serves two purposes, it gives proper credit to the authors of the materials used, and it allows those who are reading your work to duplicate your research and locate the sources that you have listed as references. Knowingly representing the work of others as your own is plagiarism

Step 5: Synthesis

Integrate all relevant information in to the final product. Remember to cite all sources and create a reference list using Noodle Tools.

Step 6: Evaluation

Evaluate your final product. Did you find all of the necessary information? Did you meet all of the requirements of the assignment? Is everything cited correctly? Are you in compliance of copyright laws and fair use guidelines? Was the research process efficient?