

Researching Your Topic

Once the topic for a paper has been decided or assigned, the next logical step is to begin your research. There are countless resources and ways of obtaining any kind of information desirable. Discretion is absolutely necessary when digging through those resources and considering what to include in your paper. Some excellent places to find resources for any reason and tips for using them are listed below.

Traditional Research

Traditional forms of research may include a visit to SC Memorial Library or the Winfield Public Library, using a book from a personal collection, or interviewing a knowledgeable person on your topic. There are countless methods of uncovering the information you're looking for. When visiting the SC Library or the Winfield Public Library, start your search at a computer; access the card catalog, and type in the information you're looking for. You'll then be directed to limitless amounts of resources catalogued for quick reference.

Once you've obtained a copy of the desired information (either by checking it out or making a photocopy) don't forget to weigh its value as a source. Consider these questions when trying to determine the credibility of a source: What do you know about the text? What do you know about the author? How current is the information? If you are unable to find information that convinces you of the credibility of the source, either through your own research or asking questions of the library staff, strongly consider whether the text would be worth using or not.

Internet Research

The Internet has become an amazing resource, but a dangerous one as well. While the web can provide details almost instantaneously, the reader may have no references to the author, publisher, or other vital information. Utmost discretion must be used when utilizing resources from the web. If you have questions about the material you've obtained, research the source. If you're unable to find information regarding the author or sponsor of the page, disregard it and search for a more reliable source.

A clue to authenticity and reliability of the source can be found in the web address. There are three main URL endings that are almost sure to lead to reliable sources. If the address ends with *.edu*, the site is part of an educational institution. If a URL ends with *.gov*, that address is a government site. Non-profit organization websites usually end in *.org* and are also fairly reliable. The objectives held by the organization should be made clear through a mission statement found on the site. While *.org* may provide information necessary for your paper, it may not be objective. Finally, anything ending in *.com* usually refers to a promotion site. Discretion must especially be used on these sites. The

final step of using a website as a resource requires documentation, including the URL address, for further access and scrutiny by your professors.