

The Research Plan

Writing research papers is a very common aspect of the college experience. You will be required to demonstrate your ability to research and write about a specific topic in almost all of your courses at Wilson College.

While this process can have you feeling anxious, stressed, and uneasy, there are people on campus who can help. Professors can help you navigate through the details of the assignment and give you advice about your topic. The librarians can help you search for research materials as well as guide you at any point of the research process. Members of the Academic Support Center can assist you with the writing process.

Prior to developing a research plan, it is essential that you:

1. Understand the assignment guidelines:
 - What are the important details of the assignment?
 - When is it due?
 - What types of sources do you need and how many?
 - What citation style does the professor want you to use?
2. Remember the key steps to a successful research project:
 - Find a topic – select something that interests you or what you might want to learn more about
 - Narrow or expand topic idea into a manageable and focused research topic
 - Determine what types of sources you need
 - Develop search strategies for searching library databases and the web
 - Evaluate sources based on quality, relevance, and usefulness
3. How do you choose a topic?
 - Talk over your ideas with your professor, a librarian, or someone at the Academic Support Center
 - Do some brainstorming on a particular subject or create a concept map
 - Turn your topic into a research question

Now that you have a topic, follow the steps of the research plan to begin your research assignment.

Topic:

Step 1: Background information

Background information can help you identify key issues, dates and events, authorities in the field, and keywords.

List 1 source that you can use for background information on your topic: [Click here to enter your response.](#)

Step 2: Keywords

Keywords are specific words used to describe the most important ideas in your research topic. Library databases use keyword searching.

Ex. Should juvenile offenders be tried as adults in court? Answer: juvenile, offenders, adults

List at least 3 keywords that you can use to find information on your topic:

1. [Click here to enter your response.](#)
2. [Click here to enter your response.](#)
3. [Click here to enter your response.](#)

Step 3: Selecting books on your topic

Find both print and electronic books on your topic using the books tab on the library's website at my.wilson.edu/library.

List 2 books that you can use to find information on your topic:

1. [Click here to enter your response.](#)
2. [Click here to enter your response.](#)

Step 4: Selecting journal articles on your topic

Find journal articles on your topic using the library's OneSearch tool available on the library's website at my.wilson.edu/library.

List 2 articles that you can use to find information on your topic:

1. [Click here to enter your response.](#)
2. [Click here to enter your response.](#)

Step 5: Using Websites

Websites can provide relevant information for your research topics. Always remember to check with your professor to make sure websites are acceptable for your assignment.

List 1 website that you can help you find more information about your topic: [Click here to enter your response.](#)

Step 6: Evaluating Sources

Now that you have gathered your sources, take the time to look at them more deeply to decide if they are appropriate for your topic. Focus on the author, title of the work, when it was published, how it relates to your topic, the reliability of the information, and the document's purpose.

This plan can be used as a good introductory exercise for any research project. Need help? For information on how to contact a librarian, go to my.wilson.edu/library.