Writing for Research at the CSI Library

The CSI Library provides the resources and guidance needed to write a great research paper. This handout will help you understand the research and writing process, and how your library can help.

Please complete page 1 before coming to the Library Instruction session, and bring this handout with you.

What's your paper topic?

You may have already been given a topic or you may have to choose one yourself. In either case, it is very important to *understand your assignment*. Check with your instructor if you are unsure what topics are appropriate for your assignment. For more detailed guidance on topic selection, consider completing the guide "Picking a Topic: What Interests You?," which is available on the Writing for Research website.
Please write your topic here:

TOPIC   _____

What's your research question?

Behind every good research paper is a good research question. Developing a research question is a process, and you will likely need to revise your question before it will make for a good research paper. The key to a good research question is making sure it *can be answered*, and that it is *focused*. For more details on research questions, see the guide "Developing a Good Research Question" on the Writing for Research website.
Write your research question below.

QUESTION _____

What do you need to know?

The next step is to figure out what you need to know in order to answer your research question. Consider your research question carefully. In the left box below, write down some things you already know about your topic. In the right box, write down some things that you will need to learn in order to answer your research question.

What I know	What I need to learn

The following 3 pages will be completed during your Library Instruction session.

What resources should you use?

The CSI librarian will discuss the different resources available to you, and how they can help with your research. It is important to think about which resources will provide reliable information and will help to answer your research question. For more details on selecting resources, use the guide "Comparing and Evaluating Information Sources," which can be found on the Writing for Research website.

- *Reference materials*: a good place for starting your research

    o *Library reference materials*: Encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, text books, and other materials that provide basic information on various topics. Information is considered reliable.

    o *Wikipedia*: A popular online community-edited encyclopedia. Though it usually provides reliable information, it should not be cited in a research paper because of the possibility of mistakes and misinformation.

- *Library books*: A wide range of books are available for checkout at your library. Whether a particular book is a good resource for your paper depends on the content, intention, reliability, and publication date of the book.

- *Periodicals*: a type of publication that comes out periodically

    o *Scholarly journal articles*: Articles written by professional scholars and published in academic journals often once a year or on a quarterly basis. There are many different journals that focus on a wide range of disciplines available through your library. These sources are written for academic audiences.

    o *Newspapers and magazines*: These sources vary in how often they are published (i.e. daily newspapers, weekly magazines), what they cover, and how trustworthy or unbiased they are. They can be useful depending on the quality of the publication and your research topic, but you will probably need to use academic resources in your assignment as well. Newspapers and magazines are typically popular sources written for mainstream audiences.

- *Blogs and websites*: Blogs and websites are very diverse. Before you use information posted on the internet, consider who wrote the information, the purpose of the blog or website, and whether they provide evidence or citations to support their claims.

Based on your research question and discussion with the librarian, which of these resource types do you think are most relevant for your paper, and why?

1.	2.
Reason:	Reason:

Searching the Library's Databases

The CSI library website allows you to search for a wide variety of resources.

1. Before you begin, write down some **keywords** that are specific to your research question.

    _____   _____   _____

    _____   _____   _____

2. Go to the CSI Library website (http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/) and use your keywords to start your search.

    Remember: it's a normal part of the research process to revise your keywords. Try using search terms or phrases in different combinations, and think of synonyms to search as well.

3. Select two results from your search. Write down the title, author, date of publication, and why it is relevant to your research question.

Title, Author & Date	How is it relevant to your research question?
1.	
2.	

Tip: when you find a relevant article (or other resource), use the tools the database provides to email it to yourself so you can read it later. Often the citation can be included as well.

<u>What now?</u>

Writing a research paper is a process, and you will almost certainly be accessing library resources multiple times in the course of writing. Your paper will change as you develop and learn more about your topic, and so will the information you need. It may be useful to keep an outline on hand to help stay organized as your paper develops. The guide "Using Outlines to Guide Research" can help with this, and is available on the <u>Writing for Research</u> website.

During the research paper process, you may discover that a certain resource you found is not as useful as you had hoped, or that you need additional or different information. With the skills you learned today, you should be able to find many useful resources on your own, but you may also want to get the help of a reference librarian. You can make an appointment to speak with a librarian about your research and they can direct you to some useful resources you may not have found on your own.

<u>What's the most important thing you learned today?</u>

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<u>Additional comments, suggestions, or questions about the Library in general:</u>