7 Steps to Successful Research

1. Choose a topic
   - Gather background information and try to get a “sense” of what your topic is about
   - Identify concepts and terminology central to your topic (use reference sources such as dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopedias, and Internet sources)
   - Develop a research question or thesis statement

2. Select information source(s)
   - Based on your findings in step 1, identify sources that will provide you with the kind of information you need
   - Do you need current or retrospective information? Focused or broad scope? Statistics? Opinions?
   - Search the library catalog for books, reference books, journals, and documentaries that the library owns
   - Search the subscription databases to find articles and reports
   - Internet sources are often good for statistics and very current information (look for reliable organizations, government, and university websites)
3. Determine your search strategy
» Brainstorm for synonyms, keywords, and terminology you can use as search terms for your topic
» Map out different search strategies: search for authors who are experts in the field, try subject searches AND keyword searches, try general and subject specific databases

4. Execute your search—just do it!
» Gather print and non-print resources
» To find books, look in the library catalog—you may also want to try the University of New Mexico and Albuquerque Public Library’s catalogs to see what they have
» Consider finding one relevant book, find it on the shelf, and then examine the other books that are beside it
» To find articles, scholarly and otherwise, use the subscription databases—start with general/all-purpose databases, but also try subject specific ones in your subject area
» Look at subject/topic terms and links, as they may lead you to more related articles
» To access databases from off-campus, use the list of user-names and passwords (you can e-mail the library for a copy of these)
» For internet sources, use different search engines, subject guides (ie.Librarian’s Internet Index www.lii.org) and remember to evaluate all websites carefully
» Keep a record of all sources you use for your bibliography/works cited list
» Ask library staff for help if you need it!

5. Evaluate the information you gather
» Investigate author’s credentials, and use current sources
» Is the information you found relevant to your topic?
» Did you find too many articles/books that are not relevant to your topic?
» Did you find too few articles to adequately cover all aspects of your topic?
» Can you think of any aspect of the topic that is not covered in your search results?

6. Start the process over again (if necessary)
» If you found too few results, consider a broader, more general view of the topic
» If you have too many citations, consider narrowing the topic

7. Write (and revise) your essay
» Write your essay or prepare presentation
» Use MLA or APA style guides for your citations (bibliography or worked cited list)
» Proof read your work, and have someone else proof read it
» Revise!