Research Like a Pro (a cheat sheet)

Choose a topic: What are you researching? Don’t bore yourself. Pick something that you find interesting.

Develop search terms: What are some keywords? Synonyms or alternative expressions? (Doing background research can make this process easier, we can’t all be experts on a given topic—consult Wikipedia, an encyclopedia, or a reference database via the library web site, http://campus.albion.edu/library/, to come up with some related keywords.)

Keywords: ____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Synonyms/Alternative Expressions: ______________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Find Relevant Resources: Find books and more at Albion College Library. Find eResources using the library’s databases. You can access them from home using your last name and 1card barcode. Popular databases include:

Reference
-Gale Virtual Reference Library
-Gale Reference Center Gold

General/All Subjects
-Academic OneFile
-JSTOR
-OmniFile Full Text

Biography
-Biography and Genealogy Master Index
-Biography Index

Contemporary Issues
-CQ Researcher
-Opposing Viewpoints
-Lexis Nexis
-New York Times

Too much information? Narrow your results by adding a geographic region, time frame, population group, discipline, etc. Use AND between keywords.

Too little information? Is your topic too recent? Are your search terms too specific? Come up with some more general keywords. Use OR between keywords.

Evaluate your sources: Put ’em through the CRAP detector.
- Currency—how current is the information?
- Reliability—are there references or sources?
- Authority—who is the author, what are their credentials?
- Purpose/Point of View—is it fact or opinion, is it biased?

It’s only right if you cite: Don’t know how to make an APA or MLA citation? Don’t scowl, use the OWL!

Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/, contains information on APA and MLA styles. Learn how to format your paper, do in-text citations, create reference citations, and more! WHOOOOO knew?!!

Most databases have a citation tool. Remember to double-check for accuracy.