The Research Process as Strategic Exploration: Driven by Questions

Think of research as: iterative; organized curiosity; never linear, has twists & turns; a valuable skill to cultivate!

1. Focus your Topic

Do background reading to develop a working knowledge of your topic and to understand the vocabulary used to discuss the topic. What do you need to know? Ask questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How? Is there a debate surrounding your topic? Identify “best” sources of information to start the research process. Narrow topic to something workable, and restate it as a research question. Identify keywords, synonyms, and related concepts to begin a precision search.

View research as an open-ended conversation and engagement with information. Tap into your intellectual curiosity, ask questions and be flexible; ambiguity can help the research process. Plan to learn along the way. Clarify your goals; is there a major source you should use?

Do more than one search, examine and evaluate search results. Remember, keywords matter! When you change your keywords, you change your results. Identify subject headings assigned to relevant search results you find. This may result in re-focusing your topic.