How do I find background information on my research topic?

Answer

Good research is predicated on having a good research topic or question. Choose a topic that interests you! Look for potential topics in your textbook or course materials. You can also browse Wikipedia or other encyclopedias for inspiration.

Consider what you already know or don't know about the topic. Develop some research questions based on that knowledge. Ask “how” and “why” questions that avoid simple answers.

- If you can answer it with a quick Google search, it probably isn’t a good research question.

Make a list of keywords related to the topic; these are similar to tags and will help you find relevant resources.

Browse for basic background information about the topic. Identify important facts such as dates, terminology, people, etc. Visit the library’s Online Encyclopedias and Dictionaries or the reference stacks on the first floor.

Refine your topic. Are you finding too much information or too little? Specify or generalize as needed. The reference librarians can help you develop your research question.

View the Library’s research process guide for more information.

Need further assistance?

Phone: 410-455-2346
Chat with a Librarian

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