

THE RESEARCH PROCESS: A SUGGESTED TIMELINE

Task	Questions to Ask Yourself	Who Can Help?	Est. Time ¹	Deadline ²
Understand the assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the assignment carefully as soon as it is given to you Ask your professor to explain any unclear details 	How many sources will I need? What kind? Does the assignment require primary research, secondary, or both?	Professor	1 day	
Choose a topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a topic Develop a research question Write a working thesis 	What do I already know about this topic? Where can I find additional background information? Is my topic too broad or too narrow? What point do I intend to make with my paper?	Professor Librarian	2 days	
Develop search strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select search terms Create search statements 	What are the key terms that describe my topic? What are some synonyms for those terms? Is my search statement too narrow or too broad?	Librarian	1 day	
Retrieve and evaluate sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search library catalog, library databases, and the Internet for sources Determine whether sources are appropriate for your paper 	Are the books and articles I've found relevant, current, and authoritative? Do their bibliographies contain information about other relevant books and articles? Are the Web sites I've found reputable and well-documented? Who created them and what is their agenda?	Librarian	1 week	
Review and organize information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read sources and take notes Organize information according to whether it supports or disproves your thesis Refine thesis as needed 	What are the major arguments that support and refute my thesis? Do most respected scholars support a particular view point? Has the information I've found change the approach I want to take with my thesis?	Professor Librarian	2.5 weeks	
Write and revise the paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an outline Write a first draft Find additional information to strengthen your argument, if needed Revise your draft as many times as necessary, seeking input from the Writing Center (http://www.apu.edu/academics/writingcenter) if needed 	Have I thoroughly introduced the issues associated with my topic? Have I summarized the evidence that appears in the literature I've found? Are my arguments well supported with facts and quotes? Have I properly cited the sources for those facts and quotes? Is my point clear and easy to follow? Does my prose flow smoothly? Are there any spelling and/or grammar errors?	Professor Writing Center	3.5 weeks	
Compile the bibliography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a style manual to assist you, such as "Research and Documentation Online" (http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/) 	In which format does each source exist (e.g., book, article, Web site, government report, etc.)? Have I collected all the necessary publication information for each source? What guidelines does the style manual offer?	Librarian	2 days	

¹ Based on an 8-week-long course

² Use the suggested timeline to create your own "due date" for each step. This will help you stay on-track with your research assignment.