

Composition Research Guide

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I. Find Books

A) Reference Materials: Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, etc.

Reference materials offer background information and broad overviews of subjects. This information is often helpful in narrowing your topic and in selecting a specific area to explore further. Reference materials such as almanacs and yearbooks also provide quick access to statistical data.

1) Suggested Titles:

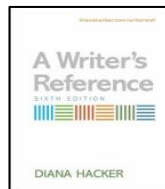


[Encyclopaedia Britannica Online](#). Online version of one of the world's most popular encyclopedias featuring many research tools including:

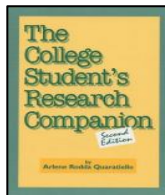
- A-Z Browse
- Biography Browse
- Magazine Browse
- Primary Sources
- Media Collection
- Timelines



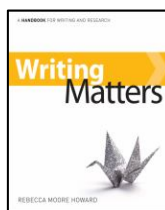
[MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers](#). New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2016. (REF LB 2369.G53 2016) Provides information on all aspects of writing a research paper, including finding a topic, evaluating and citing sources, and using proper grammar, style, and formatting, with emphasis on MLA style documentation.



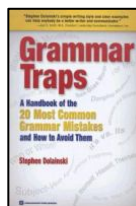
[A Writer's Reference](#). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006. (PE 1408.H2778 2007) Offers a comprehensive and easy-to-use guide to writing, with a section devoted specifically to research papers.



[The College Student's Research Companion](#). New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2000. (Z 710.Q37 2000) An introductory guide to the methods and media useful for college level research.



[Writing Matters: a Handbook for Writing and Research](#). New York: McGraw Hill, 2010. (PE 1408 .H68524 2010) Emphasizes the writer's responsibility to explore a topic thoroughly and creatively, assess sources carefully, and provide reliable information at a depth that does the topic justice.



[Grammar Traps: A Handbook of the 20 Most Common Grammar Mistakes and How to Avoid Them](#). Toluca Lake, California: Paragraph Publishers, 2004. (PE 1460 .D65 2004)

B) [Library Catalog](#): **Find Book and E-books**

Students can search the library's online catalog for print and e-books available within the VC library system.

E-Books

The library's e-books can be checked-out and downloaded to an iPad, PC, or other personal device. To download e-books, install an e-reader such as Adobe Digital Editions, select a book from the library catalog, and then check-out and download the book to your device.

View [instructions](#) for downloading e-books.

E-books are loaned for a period of 1 to 7 days. At the end of the check-out period, the book is no longer accessible and automatically returned for use by other patrons. If a book you are wanting is in use, you can place a hold on the book and receive an email notification when the book is available.

C) [Browse the Collection](#)

Physically browse titles shelved by call number in the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) ranges containing your research topic. The LCC system organizes books by subject into one of 21 broad categories identified by a letter of the alphabet. For example, books on "aging in America" are located in the "H" section, Social Sciences. The complete LCC outline is available [here](#).

II. Find Articles

A) Article Databases: Databases may be searched 24/7 from any internet connection.

1. [Gale Academic OneFile](#) is the library's multidisciplinary database that offers full-text journal coverage in almost all subject areas including social sciences, political science, technology, health sciences, literature, and more.

Students can enter their search term/s to search hundreds of journals at once for articles on their topic.

Features also include the ability to:

- Automatically generate a citation in the formatting style of your choice.
- Highlight text and insert notes.
- Download your markups into your Google Drive or One Drive.
- Filter your results by publication date, document type, and more.

2. [Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center](#): Provides a wealth of information on current issues and controversial topics. Information includes pro-con essays, journal articles, statistics, primary sources, and links to multimedia files. The database also provides assistance in citing the information selected.

B) Newspaper Databases

1. [Gale OneFile News](#) provides access to more than 2,300 major U.S. regional, national, and local newspapers, as well as leading titles from around the world. It also includes images, radio and TV broadcasts and transcripts.

III. Suggested Websites

[A Guide for Writing Research Papers Based on MLA Documentation](#): MLA style research paper in PDF format with notes in the margins regarding formatting, in-text citations, block quotes, and multiple examples of various Works Cited sources and tips.

[Citation Practices and Avoiding Plagiarism](#): Recognizing what constitutes plagiarism, along with strategies to avoid it.

[How to Write a Research Paper](#): This page lists eight stages involved in writing a library-based research paper. Although this list suggests that there is a simple, linear process to writing such a paper, the actual process of writing a research paper is often a messy and recursive one, so please use this outline as a flexible guide.

[Choosing and Narrowing a Topic](#): This guide will help you understand how to efficiently and effectively do basic research. From basic research, finding and narrowing a topic, finding articles, finding book and print sources, evaluating credibility, accessing and storing your sources to citing your sources.

[Library Research Tutorials](#): University of Minnesota Libraries
The site includes video tutorials on choosing a topic, finding sources, citing the sources, and communicating your research using posters, presentations, and visualizations.

[Online Newspapers](#): Online Newspaper Directory for the World. Thousands of Newspapers Listed by Country & Region.

The Research Process

- 1) Select a topic that you find interesting and appropriate for the assignment.
- 2) Review reference sources such as subject encyclopedias for background information to help focus or narrow the search.

For example, students interested in **global warming** may consult the *Encyclopedia Britannica* for a general overview of the topic and for ideas in narrowing the focus to a specific area of interest such as **how the use of alternative fuels can prevent global warming**.

- 3) Restate the topic as a question. Inquiry is at the heart of the research process, a quest to locate information which answers questions and leads researchers to a greater understanding of the topic.

Restating the topic as a question will help in:

- Locating information that is useful and relevant to the primary focus or thesis of your research.
- Identifying the keywords or phrases to use in the search statement.

Example: How can the use of **alternative fuels** prevent **climate change**?

- 4) Develop a search statement by combining keywords or concepts from the research question. For example, "**alternative fuels**" and "**climate change**" were identified as keywords in the question above. By connecting one or more terms with the Boolean operator "**and**", the researcher will retrieve only those articles that discuss *both* concepts, thus improving the relevancy of the search.

Enter in search field: **alternative fuels and climate change**

- 5) Develop alternate search statements to improve the search results. Authors may use various terms to describe the same concept.

For example, **climate change** is often used in the same context as **global warming**.

By identifying and connecting alternate terms, researchers may expand the search results. As indicated below, consider brainstorming and listing synonyms or word variations to identify alternate keywords.

Concept 1		Concept 2
global warming	AND	alternative fuels
greenhouse effect	AND	renewable energy sources
climate change	AND	sustainable energy sources
ozone layer	AND	fossil fuels

- 6) Evaluate information for objectivity and reliability.
- 7) Cite the information borrowed from other authors or informational sources. Careful documentation will ensure that credit is given with no intention to plagiarize or claim ownership of information belonging to other researchers. For explanations and examples of how to cite information from a variety of formats, visit the [Duke University Library's Citation page](#).

Questions?

Email: librarian@vernoncollege.edu

Chat: Select the chat icon on the library homepage.

Phone: 940-552-6291 ext: 2222 in Vernon

940-696-8752 ext: 3220 at CCC