The K-State Polytechnic Library has created this guide to help you navigate research and academic writing resources that will be useful to you during this class and throughout your academic and professional careers. Click on the tabs above to browse the guide.

Beginning research can seem daunting. Don't worry! Let's break the project into simple steps and it will become more manageable.

1. **Think of research topic**

If it's broad to begin with, try performing a search on the catalog or a major search engine such as Google to get a feel for current issues that are currently related to that topic. You want the topic to interest you, but you also want to engage with other academia and move the research conversation forward by adding something new.

2. **Make a list of keywords**

As you perform some preliminary searches, you will get a sense of the terminology scholars in that field are using in their language. Write down keywords that you can search in different combinations.

3. **Create an outline**

Once you develop your topic you can create the central theme and subthemes of your paper. These sections will make up the paragraphs or bodies of paragraphs of your paper (depending on the length).

4. **Make a rough draft**

Make a first draft of your thoughts on the topic alongside the ideas of previous scholarship.

5. **Revise**

As good as your first draft is there is always room for improvement! Read over your work multiple times and make changes.

6. **Cite your sources!**

You likely have new ideas in your paper to add to the research conversation, so give credit to the ideas you took from other scholars that support your own!
Your Research Topic

Developing a Specific Research Topic

Finding a good research topic takes time and effort. Don't get frustrated if you have difficulties choosing a topic initially. Ask yourself:

- What about this class interests me the most?
- Is there anything I have read in the textbook or other class-related readings that has sparked my interest?
- Can I remember any conversations with classmates, my professor, or others that could serve as the basis for a good research topic?

With those ideas about your topic in mind, you are ready to start researching. Give yourself plenty of time to search on your own, ask a librarian for guidance, or go back to your instructor if you need to refine your topic.

We hear great topics from students. Sometimes these topics are so unique and brilliant that data and research has not yet been compiled and published about them. Before you give up and switch topics, be sure to Ask a Librarian. If there isn't any data on the subject, alter your topic based on that data you do find. Watch the tutorial below to get started.

Developing a Topic

[Link to video tutorial here](#). Closed captions are embedded.

Finding Keywords for Your Topic

[Link to video tutorial here](#). Closed captions are embedded.

Keywords and Synonyms

[Image link here](#). An image of a concept mapping tree of synonyms of the word “think.”

Why Keywords?
- Good keywords are essential to quality research.
- The more keywords you can think of, it is more likely you will find what you are looking for.

Why Synonyms?
Synonyms make your list of keywords longer. More keywords = better searching = more results. Look at the example below to get an idea of how synonyms can broaden your understanding of a given concept:
Our advice:
- Make lists of keywords for the main concepts of your research topic.
- Use single words or simple phrases.
- Be prepared that this may all change as you learn more information through your research.
- Be flexible and be adaptable in your thinking.
- Use a thesaurus to help generate synonyms.

Popular and Scholarly Articles

Academic Search Premier (Used in class)
A good place to start searching for almost any topic. It provides full text for more than 4,600 journals, including full text for nearly 3,900 peer-reviewed titles.

ProQuest Research Library
ProQuest is great for finding popular articles and scholarly articles on almost any topic.

CQ Researcher
CQ Researcher covers a wide range of social, economic, political, environmental and health issues of the day.

LexisNexis Academic
Provides online access to the full-text of documents from over 5,600 news, business, legal, medical, and reference publications.

Expanded Academic ASAP
This is a good starting place for finding journal articles on almost any topic. Full-text and/or scanned pdfs are included for many of the articles it indexes.

ABI/INFORM
Covers more than 3,000 scholarly, trade, and general publications as well as regional and national newspapers.

Academic OneFile
This is a good starting place for finding journal articles on almost any topic. Full-text and/or scanned pdfs are included for many of the articles it indexes.

Credo Reference
This easy-to-search collection of reference books is an excellent alternative to Wikipedia.

Evaluating Sources
How to Evaluate During Reading

After you have asked yourself some questions about the source and determined that it's worth your time to find and read that source, you can evaluate the material in the source as you read through it.

1. Read the preface--What does the author want to accomplish? Browse through the table of contents and the index. This will give you an overview of the source. Is your topic covered in enough depth to be helpful? If you don't find your topic discussed, try searching for some synonyms in the index.

2. Check for a list of references or other citations that look as if they will lead you to related material that would be good sources.

3. Determine the intended audience. Are you the intended audience? Consider the tone, style, level of information, and assumptions the author makes about the reader. Are they appropriate for your needs?

4. Try to determine if the content of the source is fact, opinion, or propaganda. If you think the source is offering facts, are the sources for those facts clearly indicated?

5. Do you think there's enough evidence offered? Is the coverage comprehensive? (As you learn more and more about your topic, you will notice that this gets easier as you become more of an expert.)

6. Is the language objective or emotional?

7. Are there broad generalizations that overstate or oversimplify the matter?

8. Does the author use a good mix of primary and secondary sources for information?

9. If the source is opinion, does the author offer sound reasons for adopting that stance? (Consider again those questions about the author. Is this person reputable?)

10. Check for accuracy.

11. How timely is the source? Is the source twenty years out of date? Some information becomes dated when new research is available, but other older sources of information can be quite sound fifty or a hundred years later.

12. Do some cross-checking. Can you find some of the same information given elsewhere?

13. How credible is the author? If the document is anonymous, what do you know about the organization?

14. Are there vague or sweeping generalizations that aren't backed up with evidence?
15. Are arguments very one-sided with no acknowledgement of other viewpoints?

*Source: "Evaluation During Reading"

**Evaluation Checklist**

[Video link here.]

Transcript follows:

**Currency:** The timeliness of the information.
- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?
- Are the links functional?

**Relevance:** The importance of the information for your needs.
- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use?
- Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research paper?

**Authority:** The source of the information.
- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
- Is the author qualified to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?

**Accuracy:** The reliability, truthfulness and correctness of the content.
- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
• Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
• Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
• Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
• Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors?

Purpose: The reason the information exists.
• What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade?
• Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
• Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda?
• Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
• Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases?

Bias
Is an organization mentioned in relation to an article? Think tanks, associations, and other organizations usually exist for a reason. Learn more about the organization to identify potential biases by:

• Going to the organization's website and looking for information about their Mission
• Searching for news articles about the organizations that indicate their political leaning.

Are all biases bad? NO. But being aware of them helps contextualize the information presented.

Fact Checking
Curious about the facts presented? Are the numbers accurate? Was someone quoted correctly? There are a few things you can do:

• Look for the source of facts yourself. A good author will give you some indication of where they found the information. For example, if an article references a recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report, go to the CBO's site to locate the report.
LexisNexis Academic has a section under News for TV & Radio Transcripts. You may be able to find the transcript of an interview, or the text of a public statement here.

Politifact focuses on political statements. Researchers at the Tampa Bay Time fact check speeches, ads, and more. Politifact references their sources, making it relatively easy for readers to retrace their steps.

FactCheck.org also focuses on political statements, this project from the Annenberg Public Policy center fact checks speeches, ads, and more. FactCheck.org references their sources, making it relatively easy for readers to retrace their steps.

Get Help

Links open in a new tab.

Cool Tools

Things to make your life a little easier:

Citation Builder
Need help citing something in MLA or APA? Use Citation Builder! Plug in the pertinent data (author, title, year, etc.) from your source (book, book chapter, interview, journal article, magazine, newspaper or web), click Submit and the Citation Builder tool will generate your citation in APA and MLA style. Remember, no tool is perfect, so be sure to check your citations with a style guide.

K-REx
The K-State Research Exchange (K-REx) is a service to preserve and provide permanent access to scholarly materials created by K-State faculty and students. Materials available in K-REx include journal articles, conference papers, technical reports, white papers, electronic thesis/dissertation/reports (ETDR) and other digital resources.

RefWorks
Save and organize citations for easy citing in Word documents using RefWorks. Sign-up for a RefWorks account to save citations from databases, store copies of articles, and create bibliographies. Use the RefWorks tool Write-n-Cite to insert citations from your RefWorks account into a Word document: Write-n-Cite will format your citations and create a reference/works cited list with about 75% accuracy.

Zotero
Zotero is a free, open-source, add-on to the Firefox browser that enables one to collect, manage, and cite research from all types of sources. It is convenient to use because it resides in the browser. Use it to more easily manage bibliographies and references when writing papers or articles.

Library Help at Your Fingertips

K-State Polytechnic Library staff LOVE to help you get connected to the research you need. There are many ways you can contact us for help:

- In Person: Stop by the Questions Desk for any questions you may have during library **hours**.
- Phone: Call (785) 826-2636 during service hours to talk with a librarian.
- **Email** a librarian.
- By Appointment: If you would like some in depth assistance, you can schedule an appointment with a librarian at kathjones@ksu.edu
- Chat: One of our favorite services! Simply enter your question in the chat box on the library homepage to the right during service hours.

APA Citation Guide

APABasics

**Welcome**

In this guide, you will find information about how to cite in correct APA format and links to resources to make citation easier.

As of Fall 2014, all courses on our campus have required APA citation style. If you still have questions after viewing this guide, please meet with your professor, a librarian, or the Writing Center.

For more information on K-State's Honor Code and Plagiarism Policy, please view this document.

**APA Tools**

*The following are suggested tools to help you build better APA citations.*

- **Purdue Owl - APA**
- **EasyBib**
Remember, no tool is perfect, so be sure to check your citations with a style guide!

- Refworks

**APA Books**


ISBN: 1433805618

This manual is available on Reserve at the library front desk, as well as in the Writing Center.

*An Easy Guide to APA Style*

ISBN: 9781412991247

This guide is available to be checked out from Hale Library under the call number: BF76.7 .S39 2012.

This manual is available on Reserve at the K-State Polytechnic Library front desk, as well as in the Writing Center.

*APA Style Simplified: Writing in Psychology, Education, Nursing, and Sociology.*

ISBN: 9780470671238

This guide is available to be checked out from Hale Library under the call number: BF76.7 .B447 2012.

This manual is available on Reserve at the K-State Polytechnic Library front desk, as well as in the Writing Center.

**APA Formatting Tips**

*Paraphrasing*

If you are paraphrasing a thought, put an in-text reference that states the last name of the author, year, and page number.

Example - I am typing a sentence (Author, 2014, p. 1).

*Direct Quotes*

If you are directly quoting an author you will need to put the year of the publication after the author in parentheses, and also put the page number at the end of the thought.
Example - According to Jones (2017), “K-State Polytechnic Students are the best” (p. 1).

Direct Quotes (40 words or longer)

If you are including a longer direct quote, it must be indented ½ inward from the left margin.

For more information look at Purdue Owl's APA site. (Link will open in new tab).

Reference Formatting Tips

Source: Purdue OWL. (2014). APA sample paper. From Online Writing Lab. Retrieved from

When creating your Reference page for a paper or project:

- Label the Reference section as "References" (NOT "Works Cited" etc) in top and center of the page.
- Order your references alphabetically.
- Double space between each source.
- If the source citation requires more than one line, the following lings must be indented.
- It is important that you only capitalize the first word of the title and the first word of a subtitle.
APA Resources

Citing in APA  
*Links open in a new tab.*

APA (American Psychological Association) is the most common style to cite with in the social sciences.

Here are some good resources for citing sources in personal communication such as email, letters, interviews, and conversations:

- [Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_styles/apa_citing/other_non-print_sources.html)  other non-print sources - interviews, email, and other personal communication
- [EasyBib](http://www.easybib.com) How to cite a personal interview in APA
- [APA Style](http://www.apastyle.org)  How do you cite an interview?

(Links will open in new tab)

Basics of APA Style Tutorial

There are two (2) copies of the APA Citation Manual located in Reserves. Please ask at the library's front desk.

Citation Example:

![Example APA citation diagram](image)


[Image: an example APA citation with elements labelled]


Databases with Citation Features
These are some databases you can search for scholarly sources in that also have citation features.

- CQ Researcher (look for "CiteNow!")
- Expanded Academic ASAP (look for "Citation Tools")
- ProQuest Research Library (look for "Cite")

Refworks Tools

Creating an Account

Creating a RefWorks account at K-State is very easy.

1. From the RefWorks sign in page, click on "Sign Up for a New Account"

2. Enter your email, create a login name and password. On the next screen, you will enter basic information about yourself.
You can have multiple RefWorks accounts. This is helpful if you want to keep your personal research citations separate from a research team that you work with. Simply create a new username and password for each new account. If you are working with a group, share the username and password with other members and they will be able to access the account, too.

3. Ta-Da! Now you have a RefWorks account.

As long as K-State subscribes to RefWorks, K-State faculty, staff, students and alumni will have access to RefWorks. Just be sure you update your email address in your account information when you graduate!

**Write-N-Cite**

Write-N-Cite is built into Microsoft Word. With Write-N-Cite, you can insert citations in your Word documents as you're writing, and then generate a reference list based upon those
citations.

DOWNLOAD Write-N-Cite

- In RefWorks, click on Tools / Write-N-Cite
- A window will pop-up and will identify your computer's operating system.
- Follow the download instructions.

For Mac users Write-N-Cite 2.5 is not compatible with Mac OSX Lion (version 10.7). Mac users with OSX Lion or newer will need to use Write-N-Cite 4.

Whichever version of Write-N-Cite you download, you can always uninstall it and download a different version.

Creating Bibliographies

RefWorks creates bibliographies, or reference lists, based upon the references you have in your account. You can create a bibliography using all of your references, or just those in a specific folder.

1. Click on the Create Bibliography button

2. Select your Output Style (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago, IEEE)
3. Select a File Type. Word or Rich Text usually work best
4. Click on Create Bibliography.
5. Depending on what format you selected, RefWorks may open a web page (html), a Word document, or your text editor with your reference list.

Getting Started

When you first create your RefWorks account it is empty. That is because you have to add the citations relevant to your research.
Fortunately, most of our databases talk with RefWorks and make it fairly easy to send (or export or download) citations into your RefWorks account.

In most databases, you will select the books or articles that you want to save into RefWorks by checking a box or otherwise saying, "I want this."

Once you have marked the records you want, you will have some kind of option to Send, Export, or Download the citations. RefWorks provides instructions for saving references from databases into RefWorks.

Other Features

When you view a record in RefWorks, some information is fairly easy to identify. You can usually locate the author, title, source, and other information fairly quickly.

There are other, useful features to note when looking at records in RefWorks.
1. What folder you are currently viewing.

2. Changing the view. RefWorks defaults to Standard View, but you can look at a Full Record (which will include the abstract, if available) or the references formatted in styles like APA, MLA, and others.

3. The Get It button appears in RefWorks. This means that current K-State students, faculty, and staff and link to or request the full text of articles and other documents from inside RefWorks.

4. You can edit any record in RefWorks at any time.

5. The type of source RefWorks thinks the record is. This can affect how the reference is formatted by RefWorks and if it is incorrect, you can edit it when you edit the record.

Manage Your Output Styles
If you cannot locate your output style (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago, IEEE) from the list of options offered when you create a new bibliography, you can add that style to your list of favorites.

1. Click on Create Bibliography

[Image: RefWorks top toolbar with the Create Bibliography button highlighted]

2. From the bibliography window that pops up, click on Manage Output Styles

[Image: Create bibliography pop up box with dropdown boxes labelled]
3. In the output style manager, search or scroll through the options (there are several hundred) until you find yours.

[Image: Output Style Manager pop up box with elements highlighted.]

4. Use the arrows in between the Output Styles box and the Favorites box to move the style you want over to Favorites.

RefWorks Video Tutorial

Video Link Here.

Closed captions are embedded.