

# The Writing Center @ EOU

## Starting a Research Paper

### The Early Steps

#### 1. Asking a Question

The cornerstone of research is the desire to find an answer or to gain a better understanding of a certain issue.

- What intrigues you?
- What do you want to find out?
- Is there a certain issue you have a strong argument in favor of or against?

Your research question should also do more than just introduce an idea. Your question should present a topic from which you can form an argument and generate a thesis. You need to be able to take a stance and find plenty of relevant supporting evidence, so your paper is not inadvertently turned into an opinion essay.

\*Keep in mind, as you research, gain insight, and begin writing your original question may continue to evolve.

#### 2. Using Databases and Searching for Key Words

Databases, like Academic Search Premier, are an efficient way to locate reliable sources. In many cases you will be required to cite peer reviewed sources in your papers. You can use databases to filter through your search result to locate academic journals or other appropriate documents. Many sources have a list of key words or terms associated with them when located in a database. Once you find a useful source, you can use its key words to find other similar sources to use in your paper.

\*Boolean Terms: “and” “or” “not”

- Use Boolean terms to refine your search by combining or limiting key words to alter what appears in the results

#### 3. Assessing the Credibility of a Source

When determining if a source is credible or not, you should ask yourself a series of questions.

- Is the source biased?
- Is the source scholarly or opinion?
- What credentials does the author have?
- Is the information recent or still relevant?

If your paper contains sources that are inaccurate or overly biased, your argument loses credibility in turn. Be sure all your sources are fact based and relevant to your argument.

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