Step 1: Set Topic

Bored writers write boring papers

Find YOUR topic or
YOUR entry into the topic

Step 2: Find the Keywords

Most subjects will be indexed
under multiple terms

YOUR term is not necessarily the
best or only term to search

Step 3: Use the Computer

Computers make a lot of information
easily available

Computers don't make all that
information **appropriate** for
academic research

You **HAVE** to be discriminating

Internet as Starting Point

More information is available on the internet
than ever before in human history
But a lot of that information is **wrong**

Use the internet to get started –
to get a general idea of what's being discussed

Question everything – verify any claim

Source Credibility

This is NOT personal research

Academic papers need academic
or professional sources

Read the URL

Uniform Resource Locator
http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/PDFs/stat904z.pdf

Identify top level domain – home page
Check for .gov, .mil, .org or .edu for academic paper

ALWAYS look for "who we are" or "about us" page

Age of Sources

Academic research demands the
newest, freshest information

Not just new writing, but also
up-to-date data/numbers/examples

Source Bias

There is no absolute objectivity

Sources with a strong agenda need to
be used more cautiously

Verify data, claims and credentials

Wikipedia

Wikipedia is NOT an acceptable
Academic source

Great for starting or for personal research

No specific author – little stability

Use the Wiki sources instead of Wiki itself

Post Your Own Article Sites

Ezine Articles, Buzzle, Associated Content, etc

Anybody can post articles on these sites –
no guarantee of credibility

Simply not acceptable for an academic paper
It's like using a classmate's paper as a source

Search Engines

Academic research often requires more
academic search engines or searches

Google Scholar, not just Google

Use multiple search engines to get the
full range of results

Additional Web Services

Use government search engines to find
government documents

Meta search engines combine results
from multiple search engines

Specialized search engines focus on
particular subject areas

Articles from Periodicals

Periodicals are where information is printed first

Newspapers have limited use for academics

General periodicals are for wide audience – usually accurate info but older and more limited than academic periodicals

Academic Journals

Written by professionals for professionals - more difficult to read but more complete information

Usually need academic library, database or Google Scholar to find

Essential to ANY academic paper

Step 4: Go to the Library

Public library is a start, but will not properly support academic research

College or professional library needed

Specialized journals, databases and books

LIBRARIANS – research professionals

Find Books on Your Topic

Books are often most substantial sources

We look for books from reputable publishers and University Presses

Use table of contents and index to find information specific to your search

Focus the Topic

Deciding the thesis first, then finding the sources makes things difficult

Find the sources first, THEN determine what you can prove or have to say as a thesis

Step 5: Real Life Sources

Best used to fill in the gaps of your written sources

Personal examples, local perspective

Adds pathos to what otherwise may be too clinical or distanced

Interview

Needs to give information beyond what your print sources have already provided

Specific questions – but not too many

Always offer to share a copy of final paper with interview subject

Survey

Provides local statistics on issue

Very difficult to do properly without biasing the data

Should supplement data from published sources, not be main data for thesis

Step 6: Non-Print Media

Non-print becoming more common – all forms of information are citable

Video, CD, DVD, film, lecture, radio, etc

Some audiences will still question these sources – use them sparingly and support their claims with more traditional sources

Summation

Technology has changed (is changing) how and where we find information

Start broad and narrow down based on results

Find and use quality, academic level sources

Ignore the academic library at your own risk