EASY STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH

CHOOSE YOUR TOPIC
Try brainstorming a list — What are your interests or passions? What’s going on in the news? Are there any current “hot topics”? What are the main concepts of your course? Tip: Visit Opposing Viewpoints and click “Browse All Topics”

FIND BACKGROUND INFO
Background info is important because it helps to understand your topic better. Find background info using reference materials or McQuade’s Online Reference Shelf. Reference materials include: encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, etc. Tip: Visit McQuade’s Online Reference Shelf or head up to the 2nd floor for print materials

DEVELOP YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION
A research question is a statement that identifies what is to be studied. It should be narrow and identify the problem to be written about. Your research question should be clear, concise, focused, and arguable. Tip: Start with what interests you and refine your research question until it’s workable

IDENTIFY KEYWORDS
Keywords are the most important aspects of your research question—think: who, what, where. After you pull out the main keywords, think of alternate terms. These words will be used to begin your first database search. Tip: Brainstorm a list, create a word web, or use a thesaurus to think of alternate terms

SEARCH FOR SOURCES
Use the Catalog to find books, e-books, dvds, or streaming videos. Use MacSearch to explore several databases with a single search. Tip: Limit your results to full text, peer reviewed, and academic journals.

EVALUATE SOURCES
Evaluating sources is important because not all information is authoritative, objective, reliable, or timely. When evaluating, look at: Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose. Tip: Consider the publication date and the author’s credentials. Also look for opinion or bias.