

# Organizing A Research Project

Designed by  
Duke University's  
Writing Studio

# What is Research?

What is the Purpose?

What are the Tasks?

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- Macro-level:  
answering a question
- Micro-level: analyzing  
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## What is the Purpose?

- Macro-level: to answer a question
- Micro-level: to analyze and interpret data

## What are the Tasks?

- Develop a question
- Determine how to answer the question
- Determine what data to use
- Determine what sources contain that data

# How to Find a Research Question

- Read for background in general resources.  
What is being discussed in your discipline?

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- Identify a research topic.
- Identify possible points of tension, disagreement, puzzlement, or silence.
- **Frame a research question.**

# The Burkean Parlor

*“Imagine you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about ... You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. “Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you ... However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart ... with the discussion still vigorously in progress.”*

— Kenneth Burke

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- Think about what form that information might take.

# Where Do I Find the Information I Need?

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- What sources might hold the information you need? NOTE: Be aware that there is a lot of vital information that is not accessible on the web. You should expect to have to go to the library.

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- Will you need to collect your own information? (interviews, surveys, etc.)
- Plan to go to the library and have one of the reference librarians show you how to use the library website to do online research. Ask the librarians for help finding specific information.

# Some Helpful Strategies for Organizing a Research Project

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  - See how the conversation developed: follow the sources' chronology.
- Skim the sources to evaluate whether or not they are on the point.

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  - Divide each page into two columns.
  - Record your notes from a source on the left side (keep track of what is a direct quote by using quotation marks).
  - Use the right side to record questions, to keep a running commentary.

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- Use different colored inks for different categories.
- Write up **summaries** or **abstracts** of each source.

*“I think of **paraphrasing** as translation (Shakespearean English to Modern English...) and **summarizing** as condensation (or reduction) in one’s own words.”*

— Lady Falls Brown

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- Think about the best order in which to present your ideas and the logical connections between them.
- Use the system you have in your notes to connect your evidence/examples/etc. to the corresponding parts of your outline or flow chart.

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- Do you provide definitions of key terms?

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- See Writing Studio handouts on various stages of drafting at <http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio/resources/drafting.html>

# Resources

- Writing guides:

<http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/>

[www.bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter/Workshops/summariztips.htm](http://www.bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter/Workshops/summariztips.htm)

[www.bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter/Workshops/paraphrastips.htm](http://www.bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter/Workshops/paraphrastips.htm).

- Source tracking resources: endnote is available from Duke OIT; see also our tutorial at

<http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio/resources/ppt/Endnote.pdf>

# Resources

- Schedule Writing Studio appointments or sign up for workshops by going to the Writing Studio's website at <http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio/>
- Check “Resources for Writers” at <http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio/resources/index.html> for helpful links, and the Library website for “Research Help.”