

Research



Definition

Research is generally considered a part of the composing process, although we can engage in research without composing. Often, research is informal: for example, when considering purchasing a cell phone, we might ask colleagues and check the Web to find the best price and value. In school, however, research is typically more formal. In a first-year composition class, students can expect to take up several kinds of research. In the research process, students draw on several kinds of resources—from the library, including books, journals, and databases; from information posted on the Internet; and from field research like surveys and interviews—to provide support for their own claims in a text. In addition to locating and evaluating sources, students need to integrate them into the text. As students take up work in their majors, they will conduct disciplinary research, keyed to the questions or problems of the discipline; to the evidence that “counts” in that

discipline; and in the genres that organize the work of the discipline. In addition, they may also “translate” the research findings for members of the public.

Significance

Research can be both challenging and exciting. When we can’t locate a source, or an experiment comes out differently than we’d hoped, research is frustrating. When we find the evidence we’ve been seeking—in a lab, in a library, or in a database across the globe—the experience is rewarding. It’s through peer-reviewed, ethical research that scholars and researchers contribute to humanity.

Resources

- Bazerman, Charles, ed. *Handbook of Research on Writing*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2008. Print.
- Bishop, Wendy, and Pavel Zemliansky, eds. *The Subject Is Research: Processes and Practices*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2001. Print.
- Cooper, Charles R., and Lee Odell, eds. *Research on Composing: Points of Departure*. Urbana: NCTE, 1978. Print.
- Fleckenstein, Kristie S., Clay Spinuzzi, Rebecca J. Rickly, and Carole Clark Papper. “The Importance of Harmony: An Ecological Metaphor for Writing Research.” *College Composition and Communication* 60.2 (2008): 388–419. Print.
- Gellis, Mark. “Teaching Research Skills in the First-Year Composition Class.” *Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition*. Ed. Duane Roen, Veronica Pantoja, Lauren Yena, Susan K. Miller, and Eric Waggoner. Urbana: NCTE, 2002. 583–99. Print.
- Head, Alison J. “Information Literacy from the Trenches: How Do Humanities and Social Science Majors Conduct Academic Research?” *College and Research Libraries* Sept. 2008: 427–46. Print.
- McClure, Randall, and Kellian Clink. “How Do You Know That? An Investigation of Student Research Practices in the Digital Age.” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 9.1 (2009): 115–32.



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