

Research for Writers

I. Prepare for research: What is your book about: topic, approach, parameters? Who is the audience? What is your objective?

A. Determine what information you need.

B. Locate sources:

Online

Google Books, Google Scholar

JSTOR

HathiTrust.org

Archive.org

Project Gutenberg

Open Library

Ancestry.com

Christine's Genealogy

Newspapers.com

People

Witnesses, participants

Subject matter experts

Case studies

Personal experience

Interviews, correspondence

Diaries, letters, journals

Questionnaires, surveys

Print

Books

Journals and magazines

Newspaper articles

Maps, drawings, photos

Government publications, records

School and college records

Organization/company records

Theses, dissertations

Places

Libraries, including LOC

Government agencies

Courthouses

Archives, collections, museums

Police records, trial transcripts

Historical societies

Cemeteries, FindaGrave.com

C. Vet sources: reputable, credible, knowledgeable, comprehensive. Primary v. secondary.

II. Conduct research

A. Gather info and track sources.

B. Respect rules, materials, staff.

C. Sort, label, organize research.

III. Incorporate research

- A. Read materials and evaluate.
- B. Analyze, think, reflect, form insights.
- C. Incorporate your research into your writing.
 - 1. Avoid info dumps.
 - 2. Group facts into categories.
 - 3. Tie factual info to human element.
 - 4. Use metaphors, similes, comparisons.
 - 5. Use strong verbs, specific nouns.
 - 6. Engage the senses; use vivid detail.
 - 7. Make the reader ask the question.
 - 8. Let reader's knowledge and curiosity build; lead them.

IV. Cite your sources (nonfiction).

- A. Cite direct quotations and paraphrases; cite facts or opinions not generally known or easily checked.
- B. Use a stylebook: Chicago, APA, MLA, etc.
- C. Include necessary elements in citations, formatted the right way.
- D. Notes (endnotes, footnotes, or in text) and bibliography, reference list, or "works cited" list.
- E. Use Microsoft Word tools or Citation Machine.

V. Comply with Copyright law

- A. If you didn't write or create it, assume someone else owns copyright and obtain permission.
- B. Exceptions include expired copyright (published before 1923) or Creative Commons, or fair use exceptions (reviews, parody, journalism, scholarly use).
- C. Obtain permission: determine who owns copyright, request permission. If denied, delete quotation.
- D. Citation \neq permission