

When I hand out this assignment, I discuss it with them, going over the suggestions on the first page. The third page is a written example of suggestion #2, just so they can see what a thorough entry might look like. Sometimes I have given this example in print; other times, I have just written some notes on the board to demonstrate. The problem with giving them the written example is they then tend to just copy what I've done and not write in their own style. I'm still experimenting with how to best give them examples without seeming like I'm dictating style.

The Research Journal is turned in with the final project at the end of the semester. Like the Research Journal, the final project constantly undergoes improvement. One year, the final project required students to turn in 1) an annotated bibliography/works cited page including various types of sources they found in their research (at least one book, one newspaper article, one magazine article, one scholarly journal article, one web site, etc.), 2) their research journal, and 3) their pre and post research statements. (The pre-research statements were written at the beginning of the semester about their topic at that time, what they knew about their topic, what information they thought they would need to gather, and what sources they thought they would use. The post-research statement was written at the end of the semester about what their topic ended up as, what they learned about their topic, what information they actually gathered, and what sources they actually used).

On the following page is Deborah's assignment.

Library 191: Introduction to Information Competency
Deborah Moore

RESEARCH JOURNAL

Outcome: You will keep a research journal in order to track your research progress and help you identify helpful patterns in your own research process.

In this course, you will be learning about doing research in an academic library. For each Library 191 research assignment, choose a topic you will be using for one of your other classes or a topic of interest to you. You may wish to use the same topic throughout the semester, so by the end of this course,

you will have also completed your research for another class's research paper.

Throughout the semester, you will keep a research journal that you will turn in with your final project at the end of this course. This journal is a place for you to keep track of the steps you take during the research process. Below are some suggestions for what you might include in your research journal, but you will likely have other information you wish to include.

- Search language you used; did it change throughout the search process?
- The results of various searches from different sources (library catalog, ProQuest database, Opposing Viewpoints database, Google, etc.)
- Did you find it useful to narrow or broaden your topic during the process? Explain.
- Databases you consulted; which were most valuable, for what, and why?
- Other sources you consulted (books, web sites, etc.).
- What resources helped or hindered your process?
- Frustrating and/or "Aha!" moments.
- Your best hint you would like to share with someone else pertaining to the library or the research process.
- What you learned about yourself as a researcher.
- What you learned about the research process.
- How you evaluated the sources you used and why you used them; what criteria did you develop for that evaluation?

OVER 

Bring your research journal to each class with you so you can write in it as you complete your in-class assignments. I will ask to see it at various points throughout the semester. The research journal is worth **40 %** of your final project grade. You will be graded on:

Completeness (10%) – you should have entries for each in-class assignment. You will miss points in this section if I ask to see your journal and you have not kept up with it.

Critical Thinking / Thoughtfulness (10%) – you should analyze your own research process and draw conclusions about what works well and not so well.

Improvement (10%) – as you analyze your progress and as we learn new techniques in class, you should constantly make changes to your searching techniques.

Creativity (10%) – this refers to your creativity as a researcher, not your personal level of creativity. I want to see that you tried various sources depending on your needs; not that you relied on the same source for each assignment. I also expect you to strike out on your own throughout the semester (for example, even if a particular assignment only asks you to search in one database, you should try various databases).

Example of keeping track of the results of various searches from different sources (library catalog, ProQuest database, Opposing Viewpoints database, Google, etc.)

Search terms	Database	Limiters	Results
drug? and athletes	Library Catalog	none	4 books

One of the books I found was titled “Speed trap: inside the biggest scandal in Olympic history”. When I looked at it’s subject headings, I found “Doping in sports.” When I clicked on that subject heading, I found 12 more books. “Doping in sports” was the better search and gave me books more related to my actual topic. But, I never would have thought of that on my own.

Search terms	Database	Limiters	Results
athletes or sports and drugs or doping	ProQuest	Citation and abstract	55,172 articles

After searching the library catalog, I decided to incorporate several of the terms I had discovered into one search in ProQuest. However, my search was too general because I got 55,172 articles. So I decided to narrow my search by adding the word Olympics since I’m really concerned with drug use and doping among Olympic athletes.

Search terms	Database	Limiters	Results
athletes and Olympics and drugs or doping	ProQuest	Citation and abstract	3,727 articles

This was a better search but there were still too many articles. So I looked at several of the articles which seemed to be the best ones (based on their titles) and I found a couple of search terms to help me: steroids and Olympic games.

Since we learned that doing a subject search is more specific than a “citation and abstract” search, I did another search using the new terms as subjects.

Search terms	Database	Limiters	Results
Olympic games and drugs or doping or steroids	ProQuest	subject	908 articles

This was a better search. My English instructor says I can use a couple of newspaper articles, but I also must use magazine and scholarly journal articles. Of the 908 articles I found, 15 are from scholarly journals, 82 are from magazines, and 805 are from newspapers. There are also 6 from trade publications, but I’ll have to ask my instructor if I can use those.

