

## How Library Stuff Works Videos: Research as Inquiry

Your professor assigned a research paper at the beginning of term, you chose your research question and then completely forgot about it until you realize that the paper is due next class!

You rush home and start your research only to find that you can't actually find any sources to support what you want to say. What do you do?

First off, you need to adjust the way in which you approach your research. It is easy to look at research as a one-way linear progression of choosing a research question, finding and reading resources, writing and editing your paper and submitting your work. But the truth is that research is rarely that simple.

Rather, you need to recognize that research is iterative and depends on asking increasingly complex or new questions that in turn develop additional questions or lines of inquiry.

You're on the right track if you've chosen a question based on your interests or based on gaps in the knowledge. To do this you would need to have considered what do you know about the topic? What has been written by scholars? And, what needs to be explored further?

But you need to recognize that research is not a straight one way road but rather an interconnected cycle that might include quite a few bumps!

You need to treat research as inquiry. This means formulating research questions of an appropriate scope, i.e. broadening out your question if it is too specific or narrowing it down if it seems to be too broad. You also need to be open to revising your question if you come across any new and relevant material in your research.

So how does this look in practice? The research question you chose is not set in stone, rather it is intertwined with finding and reading resources as well as writing and editing your paper.

These three areas of choosing a research question, finding and reading resources and writing and editing your paper can and will happen at the same time and you will cycle through each of these stages multiple times before you're ready to submit your final work.

So if you're struggling to find resources to support your research, take a step back and think: how can I adjust the scope of my question to bring in more resources or how can I adjust my question to better fit the resources I am finding.

Lastly, recognize that there is always going to be a bias present in both your writing and in the resources you consult. We all bring different experiences and perspectives to our writing so by recognizing our biases we can better collaborate to extend knowledge in our field.

Think of each resource as puzzle pieces that can be brought together to create a bigger and clearer picture on the topic you're interested in.