

GETTING STARTED WITH RESEARCH

Whether you are doing independent research or researching for a studio or humanities assignment, this guide offers some basic steps in getting started:

1. **Choosing your topic**
2. **Gathering background information**
3. **Next Steps**
 - a. **Finding information**
 - b. **Evaluating sources**
 - c. **Citing, writing, editing and rewriting**

CHOOSE YOUR TOPIC

If you are doing research for a class, **before you begin, make sure you understand your assignment.**

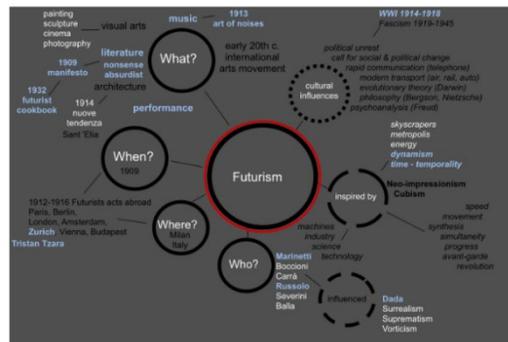
Pay particular attention to:

- Whether or not your research topic has been **assigned or can you choose your own topic.**
- The **specific task(s)** of the assignment. Are you being asked to *summarize, do a formal analysis* or *analyse and compare*?
- **Particular restrictions or criteria to fulfill.** What research sources are required? Does the assignment specify that you must cite primary sources and peer-reviewed journals?
- **Technical details** like the total word count, number of pages or specific format.
- **DUE DATE.** Plan accordingly!

Generating ideas

Check out this great [concept mapping tutorial](#) created by Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Research and Instruction Librarian Ellen Petraits explaining how concept mapping can help you sketch out ideas for research papers and art projects.

If you are choosing your own topic, remember that this process is research and that it is NOT a linear, one way street from deciding on a topic to writing your paper. It is very likely that in the process of choosing your topic, you will be going through cycles of exploratory research, modifying your research question, writing, editing and rewriting. Here's a video produced by NCSU Libraries about how [picking your topic is research](#).



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GATHERING BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As you explore your topic and gather basic information, a good place to start is with general reference tools like dictionaries, encyclopedias and sourcebooks.

General

Artists' Techniques and Materials – 702.8 F957

Art in the Making: artists and their materials from the studio to crowdsourcing – 702.8 A221

Artspeak: a guide to contemporary ideas, movements, and buzzwords, 1945 to the present – 700.9 A874 REF

Artspoke: a guide to modern ideas, movement and buzzwords, 1848-1944 – 709.034 A784 REF

[Britannica OnLine](#) (includes Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and Thesaurus)

[Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#)

Line Color Form: the language of art and design – 808.0667021 D273

[Oxford English Dictionary](#) (entries include timelines with examples of when words entered the English language as well as the option to browse by subject, usage, region or origin ex. [visual arts \(3850\)](#))

[Oxford Art Online](#) (includes The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms, Encyclopedia of Aesthetics and The Oxford Companion to Western Art)

[Smarthistory](#) (multimedia introduction to art history, including [Tools for understanding art](#), with excellent brief videos discussing artistic time periods, movements, materials + techniques, as well as specific artists and art works and art history by regions and cultures)

Design

The Design Encyclopedia - 745.2 B993

The Elements of Typographic Style – 686.224 B858

The Manufacturing Guides: sustainable materials, processes and production – 745.2 T468

Materials for Design – 745.2 L495

The Materials Sourcebook for Design Professionals – 745.2 T468

Thames and Hudson's Dictionary of Graphic Design and Designers -741.603 L786

Craft

Dictionary of Glass – 748.03 B827

An Illustrated Dictionary of Ceramics – 738.03 S263

An Illustrated Dictionary of Glass – 748.03 N552

An Illustrated Dictionary of Jewelry – 739.2703 N552

Fairchild's Dictionary of Textiles - 677.003 F165

Fashionpedia: the visual dictionary of fashion design - 746.92 F248

Illustrated Dictionary of Practical Pottery – 738.03 F778

Materials and Techniques in the Decorative Arts – 745.03 T792 2000 REF

[Ganoskin Beginner's Corner](#) - co-founded by AUArts faculty Charles Lewton-Brain, Ganoskin offers educational resources for jewelry makers and links to the discussion forum Orchid Community.

Mythology + Symbols

The Dictionary of Classical Mythology – 292.13 G861

The Book of Symbols: reflections on archetypal images – 704.946 B724

Mythology: the illustrated anthology of world myth and storytelling – 292.13 L781

The Oxford Companion to World Mythology – 201.3 O982

Penguin Dictionary of Symbols - 302.222 C527

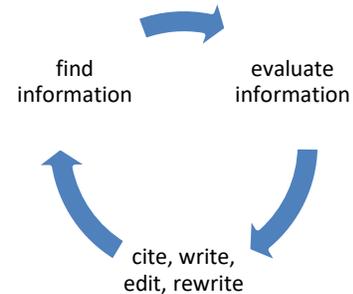
Signs and Symbols in Christian Art – 704.9482 F352

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NEXT STEPS

Once you have a better idea of your topic, you may want to write a research question. Your question should be interesting (at least to you - this is really important!), clear and focused. You may also want to think about whether or not your question is complex enough and arguable.

The next steps can be described as a cyclical process of **finding** information, **evaluating** sources, **citing and writing**, editing and rewriting.



1. **Finding Information** – learn how to search efficiently in the [Search Tips Research Guide](#)
 - a. **Use the library catalogue** to search keywords, titles, series and author names
 - b. **Browse the shelves** – the library uses the [Dewey Decimal Classification System](#) (DDC) to organize its books. DDC signage is located on walls and the ends of bookshelves. The DDC uses numbers to divide books into 10 main classes:
 - i. 000 General works, Computer science, information
 - ii. 100 Philosophy + psychology
 - iii. 200 Religion
 - iv. 300 Social sciences
 - v. 400 Language
 - vi. 500 Science
 - vii. 600 Technology
 - viii. [700 Arts + recreation](#)
 - ix. 800 Literature
 - x. 900 History + geography

These classes are further divided into several hierarchical layers of sub-classes. For example:

700 Arts

740 Graphic arts + decorative arts

746 Textiles

746.4 Needlework and handwork

746.41 weaving, braiding, matting unaltered vegetable fibres (including raffia work, rushwork; basketry)

* Remember that a book may cover several subject areas and an artist may work across disciplines. What you are looking for may not appear in the section you are browsing. For example, books on the photographer Frank Capa are catalogued under news media/journalism/publishing (70s) and photography (770s). You will likely find many interesting items while browsing the shelves, but don't forget to complement your browsing with catalogue searches to make sure you've identified all available items.

- c. **Browse the Reading Room** for print magazines and journals. Current issues are on display and are for in-library use only.
 - d. **Go to E-Resources** for online access to online images, newspapers, magazines and journals through our many subscription databases.
2. **Evaluate Sources** - click on [Evaluating Sources](#) to go directly to the Research Guide and learn more about:
- a. Types of information (information timelines; scholarly and other articles; primary, secondary and tertiary sources)
 - b. CRAAP analysis (currency, relevance, authority, accuracy and point of view)
 - c. Fake news and how to spot it
 - d. Information literacy and critical thinking in the post-truth era
3. **Citing + writing** (editing and rewriting) – click on [Citing + Writing](#) to go directly to the Research Guide and learn more about:
- a. Citations, why cite and how to do it
 - b. MLA Style citation examples
 - c. Recommended reading for writing about art
 - d. Links to AUArts' drop-in tutoring services, the writing centre and online writing resources

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