These steps were designed to help make your information-seeking process more logical, fast and effective. Modify this procedure as necessary, to fit the needs of your particular research problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research steps</th>
<th>Possible sources and techniques</th>
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| Step 1: Select preliminary topic (general). | Class discussion  
Course texts  
Overviews in “General Sources”  
Discussions with instructor |
| Step 2: Use general sources to gain a preliminary understanding of the topic. | General periodical indexes such as Academic Search Elite  
Subject-oriented web sites |
| Step 3: Write a statement or research question for a manageable, interesting, well-focused topic. | All sources listed above  
Discussions with instructor, classmates, librarians |
| Step 4: Identify the information needed to provide sufficient, relevant, credible support for your topic. | Primary sources: Statistics, EU documents, contemporary accounts  
Secondary sources: books, articles, “grey literature” |
| Step 5: Identify the search tools or techniques necessary to identify the needed information. | Specialized article indexes  
News databases |
| Step 6: Employ effective search statements. | Source-specific syntax  
Appropriate search terms |
| Step 7: Locate the information identified, using appropriate library or other resources. | Online catalog/Orbis  
Interlibrary loan |
| Step 8: Evaluate choice of search tools and techniques in light of information discovered, repeating search with adjustments as necessary. | Revise search statements  
Try additional search tools |
| Step 9: Evaluate research topic in light of information discovered, revising as appropriate. | Insufficient information?  
New information requires re-thinking? |
| Step 10: Cite information sources in acceptable form. | Give appropriate credit  
Use a standard citation form |
| Step 11: Evaluate critically the quality of the information discovered. | Check: Accuracy, point of view, timeliness, authority |
Step 1:
Select a preliminary topic, which may be framed in very general terms.

Examples:
- “French-German rapprochement following WWII”
- “the genetically engineered food controversy”
- “the effects of the Schengen agreement on European tourism”
- “why some nations opted out of the Euro”
- “southward enlargement of the EU”

Ideas may come from any of a number of sources, including:
- Class discussion
- Course texts
- A perusal of focused web sites, such as Europa
- Overviews such as those listed in "General Sources" [link to this page]
- Periodicals dealing with EU topics, such as Europe or the Bulletin of the European Union

Step 2:
Use general sources to gain a basic understanding of the topic. You will want to develop a better understanding of the background and context of the topic, important terminology, and a knowledge of how the topic divides up into narrower sub-topics.

Good sources for general knowledge include:
- General periodicals.
  - Academic Search Elite. This is a good multi-disciplinary index, with many full-text articles that you can peruse as you do your search.
- Subject-oriented web sites.
  - Eurunion A-Z subject directory. The website of the European Commission’s Washington delegation, is a great place to begin searching official EU web pages.
  - Or look at some of the guides at the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Western European Studies.
- Course texts and readings.
- “General Sources” {link to this page}

Step 3:
Write a statement or research question for a manageable, interesting, well-focused topic.

Use the information from the sources in Steps 1 and 2, possibly combining ideas from a variety of sources. You may want to test your topic against the wisdom of your instructor, classmates, or librarians.

Step 4:
Identify the information needed to provide sufficient, relevant, credible support for your topic.

Primary sources. If you want to make conclusions and judgments on the basis of primary sources, you may want to seek out such materials as:
• statistical data
• official EU documents such as treaties, legislation, Parliamentary debate
• news reporting

Secondary sources. You may want to take advantage of the analysis, context, or interpretations of others who have written on the topic, in such sources as:
• Books
• Periodical articles
• Articles in scholarly journals
• Policy, discussion, or “working” papers (so-called “grey literature”)
• Official EU information. Information from the EU institutions or agencies, that is neither statistical nor legal/legislative, may be either considered to be either primary or secondary, depending upon the use you make of it. For example, press releases announcing a new directive are secondary sources if your topic is the directives they describe. But if you are analyzing how the EU publicizes its actions to the world, the press releases themselves may be your primary sources.

Step 5:
Identify the search tools or techniques necessary to identify the needed information. Some ideas are given below: explore the “Research Tools” page for other possibilities.

Secondary sources may be identified through:
• specialized article indexes:
  o Historical Abstracts
  o PAIS
  o GeoBase
• news sources:
  o Lexis-Nexis Academic
  o Newspaper Source
  o individual newspapers’ web versions
• “grey literature” databases:
  o CIAO
  o Country Analysis & Forecast

Primary sources are often referenced in secondary sources, such as in the footnotes of articles, or in the bibliographies of books. To locate useful primary sources on your own try these techniques:
• Statistics: Use the finding tools on the “Statistics” page
• EU treaties or legislation: Use the sources on the “Treaties and Legislation” page.

EU publications: Good sources for EU information:
• UO Online Catalog
• Europa
• Eurunion

Step 6:
Employ effective search statements. Be smart about using electronic indexes and catalogs. While most indexing systems follow the same general design, they also differ in ways that can affect your results. The choice of words can also make a difference.

- Use synonymous or similar words and phrases (“teenagers OR adolescents” OR youth) when doing “keyword” or free text searching.
- Take advantage of the standard indexing terms, or “controlled vocabulary” that some indexes apply to describe the content of the articles being indexed.
- Use the "help" or "search tips" features of each indexing system to learn about how to construct the best search statements.
- Record your index choices and search statements in a research log, for later evaluation or modification.
- If you don’t get good results the first time, evaluate your search statement and revise it. Ask a librarian who knows the particular index for advice.

**Step 7:**
Locate the information identified, using the appropriate library or other resources.

- After you have identified articles from indexing databases, you may need to use the Library’s online catalog to locate the journals. Use “advanced search” and choose “journal title” as your search frame.
- Use the online catalog to locate books, including many documents from EU sources. Tip: to locate EU materials, do a [keyword search](#) including one of the EU institutions as an author. For example: “eastern Europe and a: european commission”.
- Use [Orbis](#) and [WorldCat](#) to locate books and documents NOT in the UO collections. You can borrow books directly using Orbis.
- Use inter-library loan (ILL) for books or articles NOT in the UO Library. Many of the index databases have their own “ILL” button, so you can place the request directly from your search page. If not, use the [electronic article request form](#).

**Step 8:**
Evaluate your choice of search tools and techniques in light of information discovered, repeating search with adjustments as necessary.

- Try additional indexes.
- Revise your search statements, incorporating new terms and revised syntax. Use new terms you may have discovered in the course of your research.
- Show your search statements and results to a librarian, for help in critiquing your methodology.

**Step 9:**
Evaluate research statement or question in light of information discovered, revising as appropriate. After you have examined your information, you may determine that your initial statement needs to be revised. You may decide to:

- Narrow your topic further.
- Broaden your topic further.
• Modify, qualify or reverse your tentative conclusions.
• Identify areas for future investigation.

**Step 10:**
Cite information sources in acceptable form.

• Record adequate information as you gather and use your sources. If you keep a research log, use that to record this information.

• Give appropriate credit for ideas or quotations from other writers, as well as sources of statistics, facts, authorities or other evidence you use to support your assertions.

• Write your citations in a standard, consistent style. The UO Library offers some guidance if you need help.

**MLA Style:**
[For a magazine article:] “Relations with the Western Balkans,” *Bulletin of the European Union* July/August 2001: 85-87.


**Step 11:**
• Evaluate critically the quality of the information discovered. Ask these questions of your information sources:

  • Is it **accurate**? Can you verify the accuracy by comparison with other sources?

  • Does the source have a **point of view** or bias which it is important to state and make allowances for?

  • If **timeliness** is important, how current is the information? Can you do better than what you found?

  • How **authoritative** are the statistics, legal sources, or other authorities you cite? Can you find a primary source instead of relying upon a reference in a secondary one?

  • For more help, look at “**Critical Evaluation of Information Sources**”.